

**BIBLICAL
NATURE STUDIES**

▼
REV. ANDREW W.
ARCHIBALD
D.D.



Class BS 660

Book A7

Copyright N^o _____

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT

BIBLICAL NATURE STUDIES

BIBLICAL NATURE STUDIES

BY

REV. ANDREW W. ARCHIBALD, D.D.

Author of

“The Bible Verified,” “The Trend of the
Centuries,” “The Easter Hope”

“But looks through nature up to nature's God.”—*Pope*.



THE PILGRIM PRESS

BOSTON

NEW YORK

CHICAGO

BS 660
.A7

COPYRIGHT 1915
By ANDREW W. ARCHIBALD

THE PILGRIM PRESS
BOSTON

1/00

SEP -1 1915

© Cl. A 411285

no. 1.

DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR TO HIS GRANDSON
KENNETH WARREN ARCHIBALD
AND ALSO
TO THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES
WHICH HE HAS SERVED FOR
ANY CONTINUOUS TIME

NATURE STUDIES

PREFACE

IN the following pages, nature, which “speaks a various language,” is studied in earth and sea and sky, from tree to mountain, from snowflake to desert mirage, from mirror lake to human profile of rock, from denizen of the deep to bird of the air, from leaf to star. Their illuminating lessons are certainly capable of being conveyed in a suggestive, interesting and impressive manner, though the writer may not have succeeded in attaining unto such an ideal portrayal. Taking his previous volumes, “The Bible Verified,” “The Trend of the Centuries” and “The Easter Hope,” this fourth book can be interjected between the second and third to give a regular gradation, a logical succession, of studies, which may be indicated as God in the Word, God in the World—of history, God in the natural World, and God in the future World. The succeeding chapters are of course no scientific treatises, but they are simply what they are called, namely, *Biblical* nature studies. Such is the title of the work, whose scope is sufficiently set forth in “The Seasons” by Thomson after this fashion:

Preface

“Oh Nature! all-sufficient! over all!
Enrich me with the knowledge of thy works!
Snatch me to heaven. Thy rolling wonders there,
World beyond world, in infinite extent,
Profusely scattered o’er the blue immense,
Show me; their motions, periods, and their laws,
Give me to scan; through the disclosing deep
Light my blind way.”

Nothing more along the prefatory line need be said, but the author feels a strong inclination to give the list of the Churches which he has served, and to which the volume on a preceding page is dedicated. Though for the past ten years he has not cared to settle again, having travelled more or less at home and abroad, he yet, when not on the wing, has been almost constantly employed here and there as an acting pastor. In this capacity he has been with the several churches named below long enough to form for them a genuine attachment, and they therefore are included among those with which he has been for longer periods. The various fields of ministerial labor herewith enumerated bring to his mind many agreeable memory pictures. The mere mention of them will illustrate what Themistocles once said to Xerxes, “that a man’s discourse was like to a rich Persian carpet, the beautiful figures and patterns of which can only be shown by spreading and extending it out; when it is contracted and folded up, they are obscure and lost.” The naming of the following churches, therefore, is a pastor’s unrolling of the tapestry of his personal experience to a sufficient extent for the

Preface

revealing of some definite providential designs,
which are gratefully recalled.

STUDENT SUPPLY:

Holland, Vermont;
Nevinville-Fontanelle, Iowa;
First, Guilford, Connecticut.

PASTOR:

Nevinville-Fontanelle, Iowa;
Stuart, Iowa;
First, Ottumwa, Iowa;
Edwards, Davenport, Iowa;
Hyde Park, Boston, Massachusetts;
Porter, Brockton, Massachusetts.

ACTING PASTOR:

Wallingford, Connecticut;
First, Milford, Connecticut;
First, New Britain, Connecticut;
Pilgrim, Boston, Massachusetts;
First, Springfield, Massachusetts;
Dorchester Second, Boston, Massachusetts;
Pilgrim, Los Angeles, California.

ORGANIZER AND PREACHER:

Plymouth, Ottumwa, Iowa;
And In Boston Suburbs
Clifftondale in Saugus,
Waban in Newton.

ANDREW W. ARCHIBALD.

Newton Center, Boston.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. SITTING DOWN UPON THE GREEN GRASS . . .	3
II. MIRRORS, NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL	21
III. THE MIRAGE OF THE DESERT	39
IV. THE TREES	55
V. AUTUMN LEAVES	73
VI. TREASURES OF THE SNOW	87
VII. BY THE SEA	103
VIII. FISHING EXPERIENCES	119
IX. THE WHITE MOUNTAINS	135
X. THE MOUNTAINS ROUND ABOUT JERUSALEM . .	151
XI. EAGLES AND STORKS	171
XII. SOME STRIKING CONSTELLATIONS	191
XIII. THE TEMPLE EXPANDING ROUND US TO INFINITY	207

I

**SITTING DOWN UPON THE GREEN
GRASS**

I

SITTING DOWN UPON THE GREEN GRASS

WORDSWORTH, that nature poet of the delightful English Lake region, says:

“I had rather be
A pagan nurtured in a creed outworn,
So might I, standing on some pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would leave me less forlorn,
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.”

The cultivated pagan of antiquity did have a keen sense of the beauties of the natural world. Sophocles, the great tragedian of Athens, has left a most pleasing description of the surroundings of his country villa just outside of the Grecian capital. This is what he said of the lovely spot:

“Colonus, glistening bright,
Where evermore, in thickets freshly green,
The clear-voiced nightingale
Still haunts and pours her song,
By purpling ivy hid,
And the thick foliage sacred to the God.”

Aristophanes, the celebrated comedian of the Golden Age of Greece, has given us a more homely touch, which yet is none the less appealing, as he represented one saying, “When the

Biblical Nature Studies

grasshopper's sweet note is heard, how pleasant to watch the Lemnian vines, to see if the grapes are getting ripe, for they are the earliest kind. How pleasant to see the green fig swell! And when it is ripe, I eat it and exclaim, What weather it is!"

Latin literature abounds in equally alluring portrayals, like this from the *Æneid*, when Virgil in describing the Elysian fields drops thus into the imagery of nature:

"In groves we live, and lie on mossy beds
By crystal streams that murmur through the meads."

Wordsworth's pagan, therefore, did greatly appreciate natural beauty, but there should be in this no intimation that the Christian cannot and does not. Indeed Cowper makes knowledge of God to be essential to the deeper appreciation of the well-ordered cosmos. This is what he says:

"Acquaint thyself with God, if thou wouldst taste
His works. Admitted once to his embrace,
Thou shalt perceive that thou wast blind before:
Thine eye shall be instructed, and thine heart,
Made pure, shall relish, with divine delight
Till then unfelt, what hands divine have wrought."

It was the Master himself who bade us consider the lilies of the field and the birds of the heaven. Very significantly it is related of him once, "And he commanded them that all should sit down by companies on the green grass." When the disciples had "no leisure so much as to eat," they were directed to go apart into a "desert place to rest awhile." They accordingly

Sitting Down Upon the Green Grass

entered a boat and crossed Gennesaret, but when they reached the farther shore, they found that the people whom they left behind had walked around the head of the lake for a distance of about six miles, and were awaiting the arrival of the little craft which had tacked hither and thither over the sparkling body of water. The crowd on the grassy plain at the foot of the mountain increased, until there were present five thousand men besides women and children. It was these who were fed by the supernatural multiplying of the five loaves and two fishes, in a memorable meal which was indeed a table spread in the wilderness. It is to be noted that of those who recorded the incident, one mentions the grass, another observes that there was "much grass," while the third with still more accurately descriptive instinct speaks of the "green grass." The last likewise in referring to the arrangement of the vast assemblage into "companies" uses a very picturesque word, which in the original Greek means "garden-plats" or "flower-beds." Oriental people dress in bright and gay colors, blue and red and yellow, and the nicely-arranged groups upon the verdant sward brought to the mind of him who described the scene a well-cultivated garden or a beautiful lawn decked out here and there with little mounds all in blossom. Christ's own eye must have been pleased with the sight, for the expression is really his, "Sit down by companies upon the green grass," that is, arrange

Biblical Nature Studies

yourselves into groups of fifty and a hundred, like so many flower beds upon this stretch of verdure. And there they did sit down, while neighboring mountain and lake and river contributed to their happiness.

We need more frequently to place ourselves amid such beauteous scenes, while we look through nature up to nature's God. With most of us a tender appreciation of natural beauty may need cultivating. We may need to be commanded to cross some lake, to climb some mountain, to go apart into some desert place, to stroll by some seashore, to recline upon the green grass. Darwin in his Autobiography says that up to the age of thirty he enjoyed poetry and pictures and especially music. But for many years he had lost all taste for these, finding even Shakespeare "intolerably dull," and he attributed his inappreciation of what was once to him a positive delight to parts of the brain, through disuse, becoming "atrophied." He added that if he could have lived his life over again, he "would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week." He acknowledged that his exclusively scientific habits may have been injurious to his intellect, and more probably to his moral character. That is an honest confession from the great naturalist, and we ought to realize the danger of inborn capabilities of ours suffering atrophy, as they gradually dwindle away through lack of needed nourishing. We

Sitting Down Upon the Green Grass

need to keep in touch with God's works by frequent communing therewith, and that, too, with some play of the finer spiritual feelings, and not simply with the analytic methods of the scientist. We should endeavor to come into the warmly sympathetic attitude of Jesus and his immediate disciples.

There is a well-known picture given of Socrates in the opening lines of the philosophic discussion in which Phædrus leads out. The latter, having spent a day with a famous rhetorician, is taking a walk into the country to refresh himself, and to peruse, it is suspected, one of the consulted orator's speeches, for he is carrying a suspicious roll under his cloak. He is met by Socrates, and the two start off together along the Ilissus, a clear brook in which they cool their unsandalled feet, till they come to a shady plane-tree. Before the reading and discussion begin, they admire the beauty of the spot. They are delighted with the soft rhythm of insect life, with the fragrance floated to them from a tree in bloom, with the grateful fanning of their heated brows by balmy breezes, while, it is said, "the greatest charm of all is the grass like a pillow gently sloping to the head." The philosopher expressed his satisfaction at having been drawn out of the city into the country, and after throwing himself at full length upon the verdant slope under the shade of the tree, while the limpid brook sang at his feet, he bade his friend to choose

Biblical Nature Studies

his own posture and to proceed with the reading of the scroll.

The Lord would have approved of all that, and he tells us to go apart occasionally from the ceaseless activities of our busy life, to retire to some place of solitude, to lie down in the meadow with crystal river in full sight, to consider the lilies, to note the daisies and daffodils and blue-bells and buttercups while a lesson of trust in God is learned, to be observant of the birds singing among the branches, while a spirit of quiet contentment is thus nurtured. One cannot be amid the beauties of nature and not feel a sweet call to worship.

When Wordsworth wrote his "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," he gathered much of inspiration from the natural world, as is evident from such lines as these in the poem:

"I love the brooks which down their channels fret."

"To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

Ralph Waldo Emerson, from the time when he and his brother as boys drove their widowed mother's cow to pasture on Boston Common, never ceased to feel the sweet influence of nature unspoiled by brick and mortar. He felt that sea-shells, which were pearls on the shore, became "noisome things" when brought away from the associations of "the bubbles of the latest wave." He says again in his own exquisite way:

Sitting Down Upon the Green Grass

“I thought the sparrow’s note from heaven,
Singing at dawn on the alder bough;
I brought him home, in his nest, at even;
He sings the song, but it pleases not now,
For I did not bring home the river and sky.”

We must, as he adds, yield ourselves “to the perfect whole,” to nature as it is, if we would get the full benefit of its beauty.

More frequently than we do, should we get away from the artificial to the natural. It will do us good to see the bird, as Lowell says, sit “like a blossom among the leaves,” to hear with Bryant

“The soft winds
That run along the summit of these trees
In music.”

The thought of God will steal over us, as we farther say with the latter poet,

“Be it ours to meditate,
In these calm shades, thy milder majesty,
And to the beautiful order of thy works
Learn to conform the order of our lives.”

Hawthorne’s name will always be associated with the “Old Manse,” which his literary genius made luminous. This ancient parsonage at Concord he pictures most charmingly amid its ample grounds on the banks of the “sluggish” and peaceful river rendered historic by the “embattled farmers” who started the Revolution,

“And fired the shot heard round the world.”

He loved the garden and orchard there, and

Biblical Nature Studies

“the sunshine glimmering through the willow-branches,” and the broad “avenue of black ash trees,” and the “shadows that lay half asleep.” Amid such attractive scenes we hear the man of literature saying, “I recline upon the still unwithered grass, and whisper to myself:—Oh, perfect day! Oh, beautiful world! Oh, beneficent God! And it is the promise of a blessed eternity; for our Creator would never have made such lovely days, and have given us the deep hearts to enjoy them, above and beyond all thought, unless we were meant to be immortal.” This Moss gathered from the Old Manse should stimulate in us worshipful emotions under similar circumstances. In this way there comes healing to frayed nerves.

More of leisure is needed in human life. We need repeatedly to retire for communion with Him who made the world and all that is therein. He does not come to the chafed and heated spirit. He does not come to us, as the Song of Songs says,

“Until the day be cool, and the shadows flee away.”

When there has been a high temperature, how refreshingly comes the hour of sunset with its upspringing breeze. We sit on open verandas, or on velvety lawns that receive their artificial shower baths often enough to keep them green, and we listen to the gentle rustling of the leaves on the trees beneath which we linger, until our fevered brows and perturbed spirits are

Sitting Down Upon the Green Grass

soothed. There is needed in our lives more of the cool of the day, more of its tranquilising effects. There is too much of rush and worry. We are living too fast. The activities of modern life are tremendous. The substitution of the country for the city makes a happy and beneficial change. Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" gives an experience which every one should have, and which it was mine particularly to have on a visit to Stoke Pogis, the scene of the poem. There the familiar lines were appreciated as never before.

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day;
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea;
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

"Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds."

Busy men and women need more frequently to get into such scenes, rural and peaceful, away from carking care. Dr. Henry Van Dyke in a chapter on "A Lazy, Idle Brook" well says, "Indolence is a virtue. It comes from two Latin words, which mean freedom from anxiety or grief. And that is a wholesome state of mind. There are times and seasons when it is even a pious and blessed state of mind. Not to be in a hurry; not to be ambitious or jealous or resentful; not to feel envious of anybody; not to fret about today nor worry about tomorrow,—that is the way we ought to feel at

Biblical Nature Studies

some time in our lives; and that is the kind of indolence in which our brook faithfully encouraged us."

Even if we are largely confined to the town, we yet can get the desired aloofness from the "madding crowd," if we do not voluntarily suffer ourselves to be driven by our work "like the quarry slave." We can spend a little more time at home, we can with the family watch the sun set, we can with them admire the crimson and the gold in a resplendent sky, we can sit and enjoy together the gathering of the shadows, while gentlest zephyrs chase one another among the flowers, and waft the fragrance thereof to us for our delectation. We need not be continually on the run. We can stroll leisurely by Edenic residential grounds, and drink in their loveliness. Professor Phelps says of a walk which the venerable Professor Stuart of Andover once took, "he observed in a doorway as he passed it a rare and beautiful specimen of a French dahlia. He paused; and, leaning over the fence, he was heard ejaculating in low tones his thanksgiving for such an impressive proof of the benevolence of God." There should be more of this reverent and glad recognition of the divine goodness along every street. We should not let business, or domestic care, or anything secular absorb all the attention. We should oftener get away in our thoughts from the commercial and all that ordinarily presses upon the mind; we should get

Sitting Down Upon the Green Grass

away from the "burden of the day and the scorching heat," and have more of the cool of the day, where God walks in stillness and yet in glory.

We shall thus be enabled to maintain the cheerier and the truer view of life. The right standpoint is everything for a correct estimate of conditions. Very illuminating is the story of the two buckets which constantly met and passed in a well. The one creaked out, "This is dreadful, for however full I am when I go up, I always come down empty." The other clanked its chain merrily as it responded, "This is just splendid, for no matter how empty I am when I go down, I invariably come up full." We cannot keep this equanimity of spirit, and this bright outlook on life, unless in quiet communion with nature we lose all ferment and heat of mind.

We are allowing ourselves to be too much driven and fretted. There should be more of the repose of trust in God. We are not to imagine that everything is going to ruin, that God's cause is not going to triumph, unless we drive our chariot like Jehu, unless we run our engine at constant high pressure. To our bustling activity and to our worrying over lack of results, the Master says, Stop right there, "sit down." This of course does not mean that we are to feel no responsibility, that we are to put forth no strenuous effort. We *are* to be concerned to a proper extent, for instance, for

Biblical Nature Studies

the success of the gospel. When something over a century ago the whole Church was dead to the cause of Christian evangelization, and William Carey rose in a meeting and urged the binding force of the Lord's command to preach the gospel to every creature, a venerable Doctor of Divinity peremptorily ordered the young man to "sit down," since when God wanted the world converted he would effect his purpose without feeble human agency. The great Teacher would never have endorsed that command to sit down, and yet he does bid us do that in various ways. He, for example, tells us to sow our seed, and then to bide our time, not to expect the harvest too soon; in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. We cannot hurry the maturing of the grain, we might as well go on sleeping and rising, as the parable says, while the seed grows secretly; not becoming impatient but sitting down and confidently expecting a rich outcome from labors that have been expended.

To be sure, there is danger of dropping into listlessness, of not exerting ourselves sufficiently. This is true intellectually. Prescott spent ten years in writing his "Ferdinand and Isabella," and he thus produced a valuable history. But he sometimes felt that he was taking too much time, perhaps, for the task, or at least that he must guard against idleness, for he once said, "I have sometimes been obliged to whip myself up to the work." We *do*, time

Sitting Down Upon the Green Grass

and again, need to put ourselves under pressure, a certain spur to action occasionally is helpful. There should not be, however, too much excitement, till there comes a paralysis of faculties, and till there is none of the strength of reserved power. When there comes flurry, when one becomes flustered, when there is not the steadiness of a quiet self-control, when there is mere agitation without accomplishment, be it along mental or religious lines, then Christ would have us be, not like the nervous Martha so troubled that nothing went right, but like the reposeful Mary who sat at his feet and learned to labor and to wait.

We hear often enough about improving every minute, and a diligent use of time is right. President Wayland was fond of quoting to his students at Brown University these words of the first Napoleon, "Never waste a half hour: if you do, the time will come when you will be embarrassed, and perhaps will fail of your destiny, for want of what you might have gained in that half hour." Napoleon endeavored to make practical in his own career that advice, and when, a man of war, he was asked how he came by his knowledge of jurisprudence such that a celebrated code bore his name, he replied that once for a breach of military discipline he was under arrest and in confinement for three weeks, and that in a corner of his room was a pile of old books, and among them the Pandects of Justinian, containing the ele-

Biblical Nature Studies

ments of Roman civil law. "By the time I was ordered back to duty," he says, "I had fully mastered that work; and, when the time and occasion came, I was able to apply my knowledge." That is a fine example of the importance of keeping busily employed, and for lack of this there not infrequently comes deep regret.

Sir Walter Scott slighted the studies of the regular college curriculum, and did not graduate, but he afterward said, "It is with the deepest regret that I recollect in my manhood the opportunities of learning which I neglected in my youth." This emphasizes the same truth, that we should steadily apply ourselves to the business in hand, that we should consider time too valuable to be wasted.

Now all this we hear with sufficient frequency, but the opposite truth we do not so often have brought to our attention: Do not work too hard, do not toil excessively for the bread that perisheth, "take time to be holy," to cultivate the spiritual; in the midst of your multi-form secularities, stop and think of what is higher, "sit down upon the green grass," and reflect. Even Thoreau, who was not known for his deep religiousness, but only for his intense love of nature as he roamed the woods around Walden and elsewhere, rejoiced in being able to say that by six weeks of manual toil he could get enough to supply his simple wants physically for a whole year, and that he could thus devote

Sitting Down Upon the Green Grass

all the rest of his time to intellectual pursuits, and he did. He studied the habits of birds and insects, and from the forest brought forth reflections that went to form several unrivalled volumes. He did not believe in toiling so much for the temporal, but more for the intellectual. He had his eccentricities, but we might well follow his example to a certain extent, only substituting the religious for the chief good.

We often are reluctant to quit our labor along secular lines for one day in seven, we can hardly give ourselves that respite, we hesitate to cease our monotonous round for so long as that. There is something to what Thoreau once said: "The order of things should be reversed: the seventh should be man's day of toil, in which to earn his living by the sweat of his brow, and the other six his Sabbath of the affections and the soul, in which to range this wide-spread garden, and drink in the soft influences and sublime revelations of Nature." And yet for the higher ends of existence, men generally instead of devoting six days a week thereto can hardly give the seventh. They crowd the Lord's Day itself full of the secular, they read column after column of the daily newspaper, until we feel like saying with the quaint character already quoted, "Read not the Times, read the Eternities." If the worn and weary throngs would listen and obey, they would be fed and refreshed, as were those of old, with bread from heaven, and in the strength of that

Biblical Nature Studies

celestial food, of that spiritual nourishment, they would be able like the prophet of God to go another forty days' journey along the toilsome way of the desert.

“The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With prayer and praise agree,
And seem by thy sweet bounty made
For those who worship thee.”

II

MIRRORS, NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL

II

MIRRORS, NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL

WE are to consider mirrors, natural and spiritual. Visiting once the Yosemite Valley, we were more impressed by it than with any other American marvels which we have been privileged to see. We do not except Niagara with its thunders, and with its fascinating and yet fearsome Rapids whirling madly along like Jehu with his wild driving. We also felt the matchless Valley lying among the high Sierras to be superior to the Grand Canyon of Arizona, with its yawning and stupendous chasm thirteen miles wide at the surface, and more than a mile deep down to the Colorado River at its bottom, and with its towering walls resembling cathedral and castle painted in the most variegated way by the divine Artist.

We preferred the Yosemite even to the Yellowstone Park, which is a veritable wonderland. It has paint pots of boiling, bubbling mud. It has pools of scalding water, and of colors giving such names as Emerald and Morning Glory. It has a punch bowl that ought not to be called the devil's, as it is, when fit for the gods to drink from, if they like their nectar hot. It has an expansive lake at an altitude considerably

Biblical Nature Studies

higher than Mount Washington. It has a canyon colored red and green and yellow and purple and blue. It especially has phenomenal geysers, like the majestic Giant springing into the air 250 feet, and like Old Faithful lifting a watery column of 250,000 gallons from its growling throat, and holding it aloft 150 feet for three or four minutes, and doing this every seventy minutes with the regularity of clockwork.

Notwithstanding all these wonders of the Yellowstone, we still give the palm to the Yosemite Valley, closed in with gigantic rock formations, like El Capitan rising almost perpendicularly 3,200 feet above the floor of the valley, itself being 4,000 feet above the sea level, while at the other end of the gorge the great Half Dome has an elevation of 8,737 feet. Aside from the grandeur of these granite heights, there is the sylvan beauty of a meadowy vale, through which winds a murmuring river. There are attractive Falls, like the Bridal Veil, whose silvery mist with rainbow hues constitutes a delicate, filmy creation such as a celestial bride might aspire to wear. Then there is the great Yosemite Fall seeming to leap from the sky itself with nothing visible beyond, and plunging down a half mile with a continuous roar that makes your every nerve tingle. There is again the shelving rock at Glacier Point projecting out over the valley at such a dizzy height, that rarely is there a person level-headed and

Mirrors, Natural and Spiritual

steady-brained enough to creep out to the edge for a look downward of 3,300 feet, though occasionally there is one foolhardy enough to stand on his hands or head on that stone jutting out into space.

After all these revelations we nevertheless in a sense reach our culminating point of interest, as in the freshness of the early morning we repair to what is little more than a pond, that yet is a gem, nestling at the base of beetling cliffs. We gaze down into the placid water and see not only the massive Half Dome outlined there, but we also see the sun by reflection rise several times. The surrounding mountains are such, that the orb of day rising above one height appears in the crystal depth below. Then it disappears behind a high cliff, only to appear again as it mounts still higher to an opening, and this it does repeatedly, and we have seen the sun rise a succession of times in what has very properly been called—Mirror Lake.

In the Canadian Rockies every one is charmed, as the writer has been, with the reflecting features of Lake Louise, nestling like Lake Mohonk in the Catskills among the everlasting hills at an altitude of 5,645 feet. There Mount Victoria, 11,326 feet high, sees herself with her beautiful white crown of snow contrasting pleasantly with the emerald and sometimes bluish hue of the waters. Ascending directly from the shore something over 1,000 feet, and you are at "the lakes in the clouds,"

Biblical Nature Studies

one of which, for an obvious reason, is expressly called *Mirror Lake*.

The Adirondacks, too, have not only their Lake Placid but also its close companion, Mirror Lake, and in Otsego Lake we have James Fenimore Cooper's "*glimmerglass*" with its unfading literary associations, while there is recalled what the writer of the "Leather-Stocking Tales" says so pleasingly, "A broad sheet of water, so placid and limpid that it resembled a bed of pure mountain atmosphere, compressed into a setting of hills and woods. On all sides, wherever the eye turned, nothing met it but the *mirror-like* surface of the lake, the placid view of heaven, and the dense setting of the woods."

It is the same east and west, north and south. Of a well-known glassy expanse in Maine, included in a New England itinerary of mine, Whittier has said:

"Around Sebago's lonely lake
There lingers not a breeze to break
The *mirror* which its waters make."

Like this, if Milton's poetic inspiration be correct, was the looking glass which our mother Eve had at the very beginning of human history. At the "murmuring sound of waters," the blind bard makes her say,

"I thither went
With unexperienced thought, and laid me down
On the green bank, to look into the clear
Smooth lake that to me seemed another sky."

Mirrors, Natural and Spiritual

As I bent down to look, just opposite
A shape within the watery gleam appeared,
Bending to look on me. I started back;
It started back; but pleased I soon returned,
Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks
Of sympathy and love. There had I fixed
Mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire,
Had not a voice thus warned me: What thou seest,
What there thou seest, fair creature, is thyself.”

Scarcely thus had she come to consciousness, and before she had yet seen Adam, she was casting shy, admiring glances at herself reflected in an Edenic lake, a very characteristic thing for a woman to do even in her primeval innocence.

Then Byron makes the mirror to have been quite ancient, when he says of the ocean, “Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty’s form glasses itself,” and Job represents the translucent, overarching sky to be “as a molten mirror.” Mirrors of polished metal were in early use. Hebrew women had them in the time of Moses, as we learn from the book of Exodus, and it must be said to their credit, that they gave up their bronze mirrors to make the laver of brass for the tabernacle where they worshipped. Glass mirrors with coated or silvered backs seem to have originated at Venice something over three centuries ago. But aside from what nature and art have furnished us along this line, we have another kind of mirror as indicated in the Scripture, “We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same

Biblical Nature Studies

image from glory to glory.” It is the Bible wherein is reflected the highest beauty. The gospel is a looking glass which God has made for our use.

There is suggested, first, how we are to look, “with unveiled face.” In the chapter containing this striking passage, Paul condemns the way in which the Jews were accustomed to read the Old Testament. They paid more attention to the letter than to the spirit. They were always looking after outward ceremonies. This formalism, this lack of sincere desire for spiritual impressions, the apostle compares to a veil which prevented clearness and correctness of vision. Now we are to look, he says with unveiled face. We are to put away all self-righteous legalism, and we are to be reverent and humble and devout in the study of the Word, willing to learn and obey. We are not to look into the gospel system with complacent satisfaction in ourselves, and with finical dissatisfaction at the conduct of others. That is what we do when we pride ourselves on our morality, and when we are constantly hitting at the inconsistencies of others. That is Pharisaism, and the proud moralist is a Pharisee. He in the long ago felt his superiority to other men. He had such a holy horror of the manner in which others lived, that he had no indignation left for himself.

Try to fix the attention of such a one now upon his own sinfulness and consequent need of

Mirrors, Natural and Spiritual

salvation, and he is sure to go off into denunciation of others. If at last you manage to hold him to the subject, to himself, he will begin a process of self-glorification; he is strictly moral, not an extortioner, not unjust, nor even as that publican, and away he goes with his animadversion upon some one else again. Edison, whom we admire for his scientific and inventive attainments, did that a while ago in assailing preachers, and in saying that *if* there was a heaven, he would get there sooner than they, thus holding himself up before the public, with his smug sort of goodness, as quite a model. No one can take this supercilious attitude before God, and be blessed. His face is veiled, self-righteousness intervenes between him and the gospel mirror.

There could not be a better illustration of those whose only religion consists of fault-finding with others. They are blind to their own condition. Their sight is blurred by the veil of self-righteousness which they have on. They know a good deal *about* Christianity, but they do not grasp its inner meaning, its spiritual and personal import. Not matter of fact, self-satisfied glances in the mirror, but earnest attention is what gives the true image mirrored there. This is what the inspired James says: "If any one is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forget-

Biblical Nature Studies

teth what manner of man he was." No close inspection is indicated there. One looks into the glass as a matter of habit, and off he goes, with no definite impression except that he is all fair enough. The survey is anything but searching. "*But* he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing." He looks long and intently, and is rewarded with very distinct impressions, which are by no means altogether favorable, and which make him set to work on improving himself. That is the way to look, not with the veil of self-satisfaction dimming the glass, but with all the intensity of unveiled face, eager to learn our imperfections, in order that we may know just what to do, and that doing it we may grow up toward perfection.

It is the self-complacent person, and not the penitent and saved sinner, who acts the part of Narcissus in the classical tale of old. He saw nothing to admire in the beautiful nymphs of the woods and hills. They were lovely as goddesses, but he saw in them nothing to attract. One day, however, he came to a clear, silvery fountain, with verdant banks, and sheltered from the hot sun by cool rocks. He saw reflected therein his own image, of which he at once became enamored. He fairly adored the beloved object mirrored in the water, the bright eyes, the full cheeks, the ivory neck, the godlike

Mirrors, Natural and Spiritual

head of hair, and the ruddy countenance that glowed with health. He thrust his arms into the fountain to embrace the fair one, but it fled like a fairy creature; then, after a moment when the water had become still and placid again, it returned, and beamed upon him from the crystal depths. He just doted upon his own reflection, till he lost his appetite, his health, his beauty, and he finally pined away and died. Even when his shade crossed the Stygian river, he leaned over the boat to admire the reflection of himself in the deep, dark water. Thus he passed away, self-satisfied to the last, and from his decomposed body sprang a lone flower, all that remained of him who once was so fair, and the Narcissus, bearing his name, is his only memorial. He evidently did not have clearness of spiritual vision, to see in himself so much with which to be pleased. He well represents the self-righteous moralist, whose eyes are veiled. We are to look with unveiled face, and thus get the true impression of our imperfect characters, which thereupon we will try to improve, and especially when we also realize our mortality, that soon these frames of ours will pass into shrub and flower. But there can be the emergence and beauty of the immortal, if we get the correct estimate of ourselves in the gospel mirror.

For what, next, are we to look in our spiritual reflector? This has already been negatively answered, that we are not to be infatuated with

Biblical Nature Studies

our own, as it seems to us, fair image. But more positively we are to gaze upon him who is "fairer than the sons of men." Says Paul, "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord." That is a novel use to make of looking-glasses. Their design has been supposed to be for contemplating one's own beautiful appearance, or, nicely and even exquisitely wrought, they themselves have been works of art, objects of beauty. Chrysostom, the eloquent Greek preacher of the fourth century, had to rebuke the ladies of his time for the extravagant fashion of silver mirrors. Seneca, the Roman philosopher of the first century, had occasion to speak with disapproval of golden mirrors. The gospel mirror is neither itself the thing to be admired, nor is it for admiring ourselves. The glory of the Lord primarily is reflected. Christ in all his loveliness, the chiefest among ten thousand, is what we are to look for. And our mind must not be all taken up with the external history of the God-man. Many a person with a keen appreciation of the dramatic, of the poetic, of the true and good and beautiful, can read the story and pronounce it wonderful. One may feel that the Bible is the best of all books, that the Christian system is beautiful, and yet lack the one thing needful. He may be all absorbed in the mirror itself, while never seeing the resplendent face within. Not bare acquaintance with the gospel, but experimental or experiential knowledge of Christ

Mirrors, Natural and Spiritual

in the gospel, is most important. The mirror is beautiful, but the glory of the Lord in it is more beautiful. Not the reflector but the one reflected is what especially demands attention, and that one is not man so much as the God-man. At any rate Christ is the chief figure appearing in the glass.

The face of the natural man is there delineated also, and yet to any but a Narcissus, one's own moral visage is so black and repelling, that he instinctively turns to the glorious countenance at the center. The metallic mirror of the ancients was supported by a handle, on which was sometimes carved the face of a monster, as a kind of foil, "serving as a contrast," says another, "to the features whose beauty was displayed within." What now are we to look for in the gospel mirror? The beauty of the Lord, and if you wish to heighten that beauty, contrast it with the image of the natural man. That will answer the same purpose as the monster face on the handle of the ancient mirror. It will make Christ appear the all in all, everything, as he should be. The epistle to the Hebrews sums up this thought in three words, "looking unto Jesus," or, "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord," seeing there our own moral repulsiveness, but more particularly his moral beauty, even "the beauty of the Lord."

The result of the looking is next indicated, "are transformed in the same image." It is

Biblical Nature Studies

the principle of like producing like, of outward circumstances influencing inward spirit. Let one look on beautiful objects, and he is more apt to grow beautiful. People partake more or less of the nature of their surroundings. One can pass through a crowded train and tell pretty accurately the general characteristics of the homes which the different travellers have left, from their personal appearance, from their looks. Some have attributed the handsome forms of the ancient Greeks to the multitude of graceful statues, which passers-by could feast their eyes upon in the gardens and places of public resort. At any rate, we become in a degree like what we see every day. And so if we fix our attention upon Christ as reflected in the gospel, we must become Christ-like. When the spiritual eyesight dwells upon a character so transcendently perfect, an impression is left.

The science of optics teaches that seeing with the natural eyes is the formation of the object upon an internal nervous tissue called the retina, the thing looked at is photographed there, imaged *in* the eye. With the eyes of faith contemplate that divine person mirrored in the gospel, and the apostle's language will be very appropriate, Christ "formed in you," on the soul-retina. Indeed one would think from the way Paul wrote, that he was actually two persons. "I live," he says, "Yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." There was the old self,

Mirrors, Natural and Spiritual

and then transforming it was the new spirit within. If we would put the old man off and the new man on, if we would be transformed into the same image as Christ, we have only with unveiled face, with sincerity, to behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord. Look at him as photographed in the New Testament, and his impression will be made on the heart. Keep the eyes upon him, and he will be formed within. That is the result of peering earnestly into God's looking glass; one is changed into the same image as the glorious person mirrored there.

The change, however, is gradual, "transformed into the same image from glory to glory." At first it may be only a faint impression, but it soon becomes a deep reality, Christ actually forming, as it were, in the heart. The formation is never complete in this world. There is progress. "Now we see in a mirror darkly," says the chief of the apostles. At the best we only get a reflection of God in the Bible. We have to use an indistinct mirror, and so after all we see him only dimly in this life, "but then," it is added, "face to face." That will be a beatific vision, when we gaze lovingly and adoringly not into God's looking glass but into his own face. "It is not yet made manifest what we shall be," says the beloved disciple, who continues, "we know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is." We shall no longer

Biblical Nature Studies

see any faint reflection of him in a mirror, but we shall see him as he actually is. And why shall we be like him? "For we shall *see* him." It is still the same principle at work, the being transformed into likeness to what we look at, growing like what most has our attention. And when ultimately we awake in the divine likeness, we too, like the psalmist, "shall be satisfied," for we shall see him no longer darkly, in a mirror, with vagueness, with a certain blur, but as he is, face to face.

While we have seen that the Bible is a looking glass to reflect God, it has been aptly said that "the Christian is the world's Bible." The written Word is often but slightly scanned, but disciples, says inspiration, are epistles "known and read of all men." They are watched with the closest scrutiny. They never escape observation, they are read through and through. Every page of their life is scrutinized, and many a place is marked to be referred to afterward with sneers. Not an unseemly story, not a disgraceful chapter, is passed over. Indeed such parts are singled out, and learned by heart, and gloated over. To be sure, critics like buzzards hasten by everything sweet in a character, and fix upon the putrid spots, but that is all the more reason for keeping such spots out. In other words, the Lord's followers should be true Bibles throughout, untarnished mirrors, to reflect God and not to reflect *on* God. Imperfections of

Mirrors, Natural and Spiritual

character do dishonor him, they are blemishes on the mirror.

The more any catch of the radiance shining out from that face in the gospel, the clearer and purer will be the light radiated from them to others. Daily should they be transformed into the divine image. Then as the world examines their life, it will be looking into a glass showing in each a face Christ-like in all the graces, and thus still others shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory. And yet, do the best that any can, they will only be, according to another rendering of the passage, “*reflecting* as in a mirror the glory of the Lord.” They will be reflecting Christ only “darkly,” they will be giving the world a very indistinct and inadequate conception of what their Master really is. Nevertheless, others must take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus, getting from them some idea of the Christ-like. Though they reflect only dimly the Lord’s glory, even that will make its impression. If they keep steadily before them the transfigured one, eventually there will be made upon them an abiding impression, increasingly there will be awakened in them an earnest desire and purpose to become more and more like their great Exemplar, while there constantly goes on religious transmutation of sinful human life, Christian transformation of character.

III

THE MIRAGE OF THE DESERT

III

THE MIRAGE OF THE DESERT

MANY have no idea that there is any mention of the mirage in the Bible, but there is. It occurs in connection with Isaiah's well-known references to the desert, when he says that the parched ground or the glowing sand shall become a pool. The marginal and literal rendering is, "And the mirage shall become a pool." In close connection a barren and sandy waste is represented. It is farther portrayed as undergoing a marvelous transformation, "The wilderness and solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."

It is by drawing such contrasts between fertility and sterility, that we get the truest conception of the desert. Accordingly there are allusions to Carmel and Sharon and Bashan and Lebanon. Each of these names is very suggestive to the Old Testament reader of beauty and fruitfulness, contrasting strongly with what the prophet describes as "dust" and "burning pitch." Every tourist, who crosses the Continent to Southern California, and who from the Mojave desert drops down over the mountains into San Bernardino with its orange

Biblical Nature Studies

groves, can appreciate what the sacred writer tries to set forth.

Or, we call to mind Sahara, Africa's vast stretch of hot sand, three thousand miles in extreme length, and a thousand on an average in width. It has no rainfall, it has a climate of burning aridity, the temperature under a vertical sun sometimes rising to two hundred degrees. There is no verdure to absorb the rays, but, glowing sand everywhere, like an oven, reflects them seven times heated. There are no bracing breezes, but only simoons and other furnace-like winds, which carry with them clouds of the dry, red particles that are like fine, hot shot to assail the face. Very properly has the question been agitated as to whether this dreary waste cannot be reclaimed for vegetation and for cultivation, by reconverting part of it into a sea like that which at no remote geological period, probably during the glacial epoch, did roll over the sandy bottom. It has been proposed to cut a canal, and let the Atlantic or Mediterranean sweep in, if possibly thereby the atmosphere might be modified, and the wilderness and solitary place might be made glad, the desert being made to rejoice and blossom as the rose. That would be a glorious transformation, justifying Isaiah's exuberant description.

Now there is a desert more immense than Mojave or Sahara. As another has said, "Earth is a desert drear." This life has been

The Mirage of the Desert

called a wilderness of woe. There may be and are pleasant oases, there may be and is for us the "shadow of a great rock in a weary land," and yet in the main we are crossing an arid desert, with burning sands beneath our feet and with a glowing sun above our heads. Ours at present is more largely than is agreeable the torrid zone, is what one of the Lord's parables calls "the burden and heat of the day," or, as the Revised Version has it, "the scorching heat."

With the desert thus indicated, we come next to the mirage thereon. All are acquainted with this strange natural phenomenon, with this optical illusion. There is the appearance of water ahead for the thirsty traveller, but the treacherous lake ever recedes. It seems real, but it is all a delusion. Says Southey,

"Still the same burning sun! no cloud in heaven!
The hot air quivers, and the sultry mist
Floats o'er the desert, with a show
Of distant waters mocking their distress."

The deception is most complete. The apparent lake sometimes is dotted with little islands. It may have an undulatory surface, while its heaving bosom is traversed by shadows chasing one another in the most natural manner. Shade trees occasionally are seen on its shore, which rippling waves seem to lave. But the deceitful sheet of water retreats as fast as one advances. It is never overtaken. It is a mirage, which

Biblical Nature Studies

often occurs in the moral as well as in the physical world.

Must we ever be disappointed? Certainly not, for the glowing sand, the mirage, shall become a pool. That is, the illusive appearance of a lake shall become a real body of water. The same prophet says elsewhere, "They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water." The margin again says, "neither shall the mirage smite them," for God shall lead them where there is cool, springing water. He does not disappoint souls thirsting for righteousness. He does not allure them on by any mirage.

Jeremiah did once feel that God was leading him deceptively on, and in his distress he cried out, "Wilt thou indeed be unto me as a deceitful brook, as waters that fail?" There may be here an allusion to the mirage, although the word is not directly used, as it is the two times by Isaiah. Both prophets, however, were assured that God never does disappoint; nay, he alone turns the appearance of a lake into the genuine thing. "The mirage shall become a pool," is the assertion, which is followed with the explanation, "and the thirsty ground springs of water," which is preceded also by the explanatory, "for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." Only the irreligious and unbelieving are mocked

The Mirage of the Desert

by the ever-receding lake, are tantalized like Tantalus, who in the Grecian tale stood to the chin in water which yet constantly eluded him in his insatiable thirst. Mohammed was right when he said in the Koran, "As for those who believe not, their works are like the mirage of the plain: the thirsty imagines it to be water, but when he reaches it he finds it is nothing."

Wherein practically does the mirage consist? For one thing, pleasure is sought, but it does not satisfy. People go into society to have the yearnings of their natures met. They indulge in the gaieties of social life, but they tire of these as they grow older. They find that they have been chasing a mirage. In the Summer season again, thousands visit the great fashionable resorts. They crowd the mountain houses, which are being erected in greater and greater numbers annually. They camp out in the high Sierras, or in the matchless Yosemite Valley, where majesty and loveliness are combined. They throng watering places. They go to Saratoga with its single hotels capable of accommodating two thousand guests. They make the lake shore resound with their merri-ment, as they go from point to point on excursion boats, with bands playing and flags flying.

They walk the beach of old ocean, and listen to its anthem rolled up in the great tidal organ-swells of the Almighty. They pour out of city and town in long trains in search of quiet nooks

Biblical Nature Studies

in the country. They penetrate unbroken forests, and canoe and fish in limpid streams, and level their cameras at deer that start up surprised at their first sight of the human face. They patronize ocean liners, and travel from country to country all alive with the historic, and full of masterpieces of art, both painting and sculpture, and abounding in superb natural scenery. Why all this movement, and stir? It is for pleasure. But in a few weeks all are weary of it, and are glad to get back to home and regular work. At any rate, they have not found permanent satisfaction for their restless natures. They have pursued a mirage, so far as the meeting of their deeper and their spiritual needs is concerned.

Neither does wealth, desirable as this may be and is, fill for them the aching void. Their ambition is to become rich as Crœsus, who, when he wanted a picture of his baking woman, could afford to have a life-size statue made of her in solid gold, and who according to classical story could resort to other like extravagances. What colossal fortunes men accumulate nowadays! They do become rich as Crœsus, and richer. They build palatial residences, surrounded with ample grounds which are beautiful Edens. They travel in their own private railroad car, which is elegant beyond description. They have their automobiles and their yachts, and even airships. Are they happy and contented? They are not, and in their sober

The Mirage of the Desert

moments they endorse the wisdom of the proverb,

“Give me neither poverty nor riches;
Feed me with the food that is needful for me.”

They may even say with the richest man, of whom we are informed in Holy Writ, “Better is a handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit.” Many a millionaire, in the midst of urban heat and dust, in the midst of the stress and strain of unrelenting and exacting business, recalling

“An old farm-house with meadows wide,
And sweet with clover on each side,”

can still farther say with the poetess,

“O, could I only tread once more
The field-path to the farm-house door,
The old, green meadow could I see,
How happy, happy, happy,
How happy I should be.”

As to how superabundant means may be only disquieting instead of heart-satisfying finds illustration in a tale of the Alhambra, the memory of a visit to which still lingers pleasantly with me. Among the legends connected with this beautiful ruin of Moorish splendor in Spain, none is more charming than that of the “two discreet statues,” as related by Washington Irving in his inimitable way. A beggar occupied a dilapidated apartment in Granada’s towered height. He was a little, merry fellow, who was the gardener of the place. With his

Biblical Nature Studies

happy-go-lucky ways he was a favorite among the poverty-stricken inmates of the once glorious palace and fortress combined. He always had his joke, and his guitar helped to diffuse merriment. He had never a care.

But one day his young daughter found a carved, black hand, which turned out to be a Moorish talisman that gave her admission to chambers beneath the Alhambra, where Boabdil, the last of the Moors to reign over Granada, held a phantom court, and where from an enchanted lady she learned a secret that was to make her father wealthy. She had often seen the two nymphs of alabaster at the portal of the vaults beneath the tower of Comares. Her attention was now called to what she had never noticed before, to the fact that both turned their gaze within the vaulted chambers, and were looking at the same point. She was informed that if her father some night with her help would examine the wall exactly there, he would discover treasures which would relieve him of the necessity of gardening any more. From the eyes of the two statuesque females he, when unobserved, drew lines to the point of convergence, and marked the precise place on the wall, and then eagerly awaited the darkness. But even the *hope* of riches spoiled his happiness, his quietude of mind. He feared that some one else would discover the secret. He wished the two statues would look in some other direction, and not betray where the

The Mirage of the Desert

treasures were. Just as if they had not been fixing their eyes upon that very spot for centuries.

The former happy but now much perturbed gardener was suspicious of every visitor, and was sure that every such person might note how the two feminine statues were watching the enchanted riches. "They are just like all their sex," he at last grumbled to himself, "if they have not tongues to tattle with, they'll be sure to do it with their eyes." But the two marble females, who had guarded the secret ever since the expelled Moors hid the treasures there, did not betray their trust, and that night when the place was opened, two large porcelain jars, filled with gold and jewels, when touched by the hand of the daughter with her magical charm came forth to make the discoverer and his family independent for life. But again was he disturbed in mind as to a place of safety for his sudden riches. He feared robbers in his insecure habitation, where formerly he had slept peacefully with doors unlocked. He worried, he lost his gaiety, and his friends, who were not pleased with his anxious looks and melancholy ways (which they understood not), who left him more and more to his devices, till he was lonely and miserable, whereas he once had been the life of a considerable circle. Now all this, fable though it be, shows that wealth does not bring felicity, and may even substitute wretchedness. The tale proves this, even

Biblical Nature Studies

though we do get one more glimpse of Irving's quaint character at Malaga with his coach-and-six, living in luxury, and mingling with Spanish grandees. Like others he finally had to part with all his possessions. Does wealth satisfy? Eventually it all, be it more or less, has to be left behind. Fleeting riches are nothing but a mirage, they "make themselves wings," as Scripture says, and very few comparatively attain them at all, for they recede from the grasp like the rainbow with its fabled pot of gold, and the folly of chasing rainbows we all recognize.

Coveted fame is equally disappointing at the last. How soon all except the very greatest, and these exceedingly meager in number, are practically if not quite forgotten! How many of the emperors of Rome through the centuries can the average person name? Some, to be sure, like Marcus Aurelius and Constantine, but not many. How many of the lettered men of Greece? Some, of course, like Homer and Plato, and Pindar and Sophocles, but they can be counted on the fingers of the two hands. How many of the prominent generals belonging to so recent and familiar history as that of our Revolutionary War? The long ages of China's existence, and of Japan's, and of India's, and even of Russia's, are almost a blank in our minds. We could not so much as pronounce the names of their celebrities. What countless thousands, esteemed celebrated in their day

The Mirage of the Desert

and generation, at present lie enshrouded in oblivion!

Visit an old cemetery, and most of the names, if they can be read at all on the crumbling or weather-beaten stones, stand for nothing after the lapse of about a century, and we only know that such lived and died, having mingled amid such scenes as we do at present. Besides, if one does rise to a brief eminence, how unsatisfactory it is according to the best testimony! Shakespeare well makes Henry the Sixth to say in admiration of the shepherd's humble lot:

“Ah, what a life were this! how sweet! how lovely!
Gives not the hawthorn bush a sweeter shade
To shepherds, looking on their silly sheep,
Than doth a rich embroidered canopy
To kings that fear their subjects' treachery?”

The winter of time plays havoc with nearly every one's fame, as the winter of misfortune did with the greatness of the proud minister of Henry the Eighth. Verily worldly distinction, without spiritual attainment, is a mirage alluring on to certain disappointment.

But when the divine is sought, the mirage becomes a pool, becomes springs of water. Entirely proper is the seeking of pleasures, which however should not be the pleasures of sin for a season, or even brief innocent recreations and enjoyments, so much as the pleasures forevermore. Perfectly right is the pursuit of riches, but only as we lay up treasures in heaven will the mirage be displaced by the

Biblical Nature Studies

real satisfying waters of eternal possessions. Wholly legitimate is the desire to live in the hereafter, but there is no elixir of immortality in the dancing bauble of mere worldly fame; we should seek "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only," says an apostle, "hath immortality." It is thus that the mirage ceases to smite for travellers over life's dreary waste, for those who have the life and purpose and spirit of the Christ.

This world in all its various aspects is like the ever-promising, yet ever-deceptive, and ever-disappointing mirage, but a religious experience makes the mirage a cool lake, and the glowing sand a blossoming garden. Seeking first the kingdom, not pleasure or wealth or fame, the weary land then has the shadow of a great rock, and the delightful oasis, and eventually it shall be clothed throughout with verdure and beauty and fruitfulness. The Sahara of life shall increasingly here and entirely hereafter be transformed into the heavenly Paradise. Christian faith changes disappointment to realization, as she looks farther into the future than we are wont to do. Tennyson has well said of faith,

"She spies the summer thro' the winter bud,
She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,
She hears the lark within the songless egg,
She finds the fountain where they wail'd Mirage!"

It is after this fashion that the trying, blister-

The Mirage of the Desert

ing desert gives way to fair, refreshing Beulah land, which can be the inheritance of all, and which alone is permanent and soul-satisfying.

“Life has many a pleasant hour,
Many a bright and cloudless day;
Singing bird and smiling flower,
Scatter sunbeams on our way;
But the sweetest blossoms grow
In the land to which we go.”

The desert will have blossomed as the rose, and the mirage will have become a mere memory.

IV
THE TREES

IV

THE TREES

It is a refreshing change to turn from the desert to the trees. These have their lessons to convey. Shakespeare "finds tongues in trees," and we are to listen to them as they speak. One of the oldest parables in any literature is that in the book of the Judges, where the trees are represented as gathered in a sort of political convention to choose a king. The first to be nominated was the olive, and as the shout went up, "Reign thou over us," we can imagine the tumultuous applause that must have run through the waving branches. But the king-elect saw no reason for leaving its "fatness," its productive power for good, for the doubtful honor of exaltation "to wave to and fro over the trees." The declination caused a momentary lull, and then there was the sudden nomination of the fig-tree, and the music of "Hail to the Chief" must have broken from all the excited and leafy boughs. Again was there a refusal to cease yielding "sweetness and good fruit" for an empty promotion. After this there must have been whisperings here and there throughout the gathering, till sentiment seemed to crystallize once more with the nam-

Biblical Nature Studies

ing of the vine, and all the trees clapped their hands. But this nominee arose and with a graceful and sweeping bow likewise refused to leave its "new wine," its good cheer for all, for the purpose of lording it over the rest. Not till the bramble had been nominated, was there an eager acceptance of the position, and out of it with its power to lacerate came speedily destructive "fire," involving all in ruin.

This was a most striking lesson in democracy, condemnatory of the ambitious and unprincipled politician in civic life, of the imperious and selfish leader in society, and of the domineering man or woman, loving to have the preeminence, in the church. The modest workers uniting their various gifts are to be desired in preference to the selfishly aspiring. Of course there must be those who take the initiative, and those who must be followers, in every movement, and this is right and necessary so long as the former regard themselves as acting only in a representative capacity. Many are to be reprov'd, because they do not recognize their responsibility.

In the sphere of civics particularly, a good man cannot leave his fatness, his wealth, his making of money wherewith to serve God and man, he says, in order to go and vote. He cannot leave "home, sweet home," to go out and cast his ballot. He will settle down amid the comfort of the domestic circle, and neglect his duty as a citizen. He cannot even leave his

The Trees

pleasures, his pursuit of life's good cheer, to go out and deposit a thunderous No, when the licensing of the liquor traffic is involved. He cannot meet a public trust by so much as taking his turn in accepting an elective office for a period. The result is, the bad man, the corrupt citizen, comes to the front, and soon a city is torn with contention and strife because of a reign of graft and immorality. The bramble is always ready to jump into a position where there is an opportunity to gain personal advantage, and by and by the body politic is lacerated with thorns, or a community is ravaged, as it were, with devastating flames.

There is another Old Testament scene that is very instructive, when the mulberry-trees gave a signal for battle, like that stirring one of Nelson in a crisis, "England expects every man to do his duty." David carried victory against his Philistine enemies, because he heeded this divine admonition, "And it shall be, when thou hearest the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry-trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself." Not always do the trees speak to us of quiet, for sometimes the lively moving of their foliage is a summons to us for action. Beneath over-arching branches, ours should not constantly be dreamy musings, for there are times when we should awake to the call of duty. We need occasionally to be roused out of repose, to be stirred to strenuous endeavor. There is a soul agitation, that sometimes is desirable,

Biblical Nature Studies

leading to right conduct, when Isaiah's words shall be fulfilled in our experience. Of a Biblical monarch and of those over whom he ruled, the prophet said, "And his heart trembled, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest tremble with the wind." Devoutly to be wished for is the spiritual sensitiveness to divine movings therein pictured.

Getting in still closer touch with our subject, it is to be observed that we rightly form real attachments for trees. On the farm of my boyhood there was a hill clothed with sugar maples to its summit, and there a stately elm towered above them all, and outlined its top against the sky. My father would come in of an evening and remark, "It is a very dark night, for the old elm cannot be seen." In the gloom he seemed to miss its companionship, its message of cheer and brightness from the top of the mountain. There must be something wrong with us, if we do not come to love certain trees, both for themselves, and because of associations that may be very dear. Sluggish must be the heart that does not respond to the sentiment of the writer of "Woodman, spare that tree."

“When but an idle boy
I sought its grateful shade;
In all their gushing joy
Here too my sisters played.
My mother kissed me here:
My father pressed my hand—
Forgive this foolish tear,
But let that old oak stand.”

The Trees

We cannot wonder very much that our ancestors in England, the Druids, worshipped the oak, in view of what Dryden says of the same:

“The monarch oak, the patriarch of the trees,
Shoots rising up, and spreads by slow degrees;
Three centuries he grows, and three he stays
Supreme in state—and in three more decays.”

Surely there is in it, with its nearly thousand years of existence, “more abundant life” than in man, who perishes after the brief period of three score and ten years. Think of the successive human generations that pass away during the lifetime of a single monarch of the forest. We can say with Cowper,

“It seems idolatry with some excuse
When our forefather Druids in their oaks
Imagined sanctity.”

It, however, is not of oak or elm, of maple or birch, of pine or fir, that we are specifically to speak, but of exclusively Biblical trees. We read regarding Solomon, “And he spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall.” He made an exhaustive study of forestry. What particularly he said about the trees is uncertain. He may have treated of them under the head of natural history, or he may have used them to illustrate divine truth. Josephus says, “He spake a parable upon every sort of tree, from the hyssop to the cedar.” This, undoubt-

Biblical Nature Studies

edly, is the correct conclusion, for though the work has been lost, there are in his extant writings references to the trees, and in these spiritual lessons are conveyed. It is he who in a proverb compares wisdom to a "tree of life." If then we could have his treatise, we certainly would be very much instructed even from a religious standpoint. But other sacred writers furnish us with suggestions here.

Take the smallest mentioned, which is little more than a shrub, the hyssop. It was used to sprinkle the blood of the Paschal lamb upon the door-posts of the Israelites, when all Egypt's first-born were slain, except in those houses which were passed over by the destroying angel at the sight of the blood drops. It was also used in various rites of purification, and hence the Psalmist cries :

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean :
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

This cleansing from sin is what every one to-day needs. He should be the hyssop to receive the precious blood of the spotless Lamb of God, and to sprinkle it upon other defiled souls. This is the starting-point, the small shrub, the hyssop springing out of the wall, and Isaiah says, "thou shalt call thy walls Salvation," and the foundation stone therein is the Rock of Ages, clinging to which the hyssop can sing (for we read in the Chronicles, "Then *shall* the trees of the wood sing,") :

The Trees

“Saviour, more than life to me,
I am clinging, clinging close to thee;
Let thy precious blood applied,
Keep me ever, ever near thy side.”

So much for the hyssop springing out of the wall, for the very commencement of the religious life. It is a life of natural helplessness, and of clinging faith.

But one should be more than the clinging shrub. He should become fruitful, and the fig-tree was specially noted for its fruitfulness. To dwell under one's own fig-tree was a favorite Scriptural emblem of plenty, of every want satisfied. It was a tree which yielded several crops annually, and under hothouse cultivation it has been known to produce eight times a year. Very properly, therefore, did Christ curse the barren fig-tree, upon which, says Mark, “He found nothing but leaves.” Very appropriately did he say afterward, “From the fig-tree learn her parable.” What is the lesson? The solemn and needful warning is given in the simple lines,

“Ah, who shall thus the Master meet,
And bring but withered leaves?
Ah, who shall at the Saviour's feet,
Before the awful judgment-seat
Lay down for golden sheaves,
Nothing but leaves, nothing but leaves!”

One is not merely to cling to Christ for salvation, like the hyssop springing out of the wall, but he is to ripen in character; he is to bear fruit, he is to be a fig-tree, he is to be of some

Biblical Nature Studies

use to others. This truth is similarly imaged in that well-known picture of the cross rising out of tumultuous waters, while a beautiful female figure clings to the transverse beam with one arm, and with the other rescues another person, who is about to sink beneath the waves.

The olive conveys another lesson. What is it that we most of all crave? It is repose of mind, it is quietude of spirit, it is that flower of character known as heart's-ease. Now the olive speaks of just this peace and tranquility. We talk about extending the olive branch, when there is a truce to war, when harmony is restored, when quiet again reigns. Why is it that this tree has such associations? Can it be because a dove bore a leaf of it to the ark to tell in the mute language of a bird that the flood had abated? It is not without significance that tradition represents the dove to have introduced the olive into Greece, carrying a branch of it from Phœnicia to the temple of Jupiter in Epirus. Thomson in his "Land and the Book" says from what he himself had observed in Palestine, that olive groves are a favorite resort of doves: "In them they build their nests and rear their young, and there may be heard all day long their low, soft cooing, in sweet unison with the breeze which whispers peace to the troubled and repose to the weary." These trees thus give us a perfect picture of unshaken calm.

But is not the olive subject to tempests?

The Trees

Certainly, for in Job we have a reference to casting "off his flower as the olive." There are winds which make the blossoms to fall by the myriad, until the ground is literally covered, but the tree, says another, only turns its "fatness to those which will mature into fruit." It does not utterly succumb to adverse influences. Nay, there may be what Isaiah calls the "shaking of an olive-tree," yet the prophet mentions "two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outermost branches." The fruit is not all shaken off. God does not entirely destroy. He may shake the olive by tremendous storms, but it retains some of its fruit in the uppermost and outermost branches. It may be pretty thoroughly stripped, as Job was who yet could trust though slain, but the tempest-swayed olive holds on to what fruit it can, until by and by its boughs are again at rest, and not entirely denuded. When one has made his peace with his Maker, all the storms that may sweep over him will leave him still trusting, and still bearing fruit.

The significance of our next tree, the palm, is given by the familiar lines,

"Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again,—
The eternal years of God are hers."

This speaks of recuperative power found in those who may have crushing experiences, but who themselves are *not* crushed. They answer to Paul's description, "smitten down, yet not

Biblical Nature Studies

destroyed.” Says Holy Writ, “The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree.” How does it flourish? It grows best by fountains, where it multiplies very rapidly. One of the camping-places of the Israelites was “where were twelve springs of water, and three score and ten palm-trees.” Referring to the rising of the temple at Jerusalem without the sound of axe or hammer or any iron tool, a poet has said,

“Like some tall palm the noiseless fabric sprung.”

These trees *are* tall, and they spring noiselessly straight up into the air, and nothing of weight or wind can deflect them out of their course, can make them otherwise than perfectly upright. An Oriental traveller mentions them standing in the plains like “military sentinels, with feathery plumes nodding gracefully on their proud heads.” This tree cannot be crushed into crookedness, crushed to earth it rises again. It is the very image of triumph over obstacles. Having done all, says an apostle, we are “to *stand*.” Longfellow gives the same thought in the lines,

“As the palm-tree standeth so straight and so tall,
The more the hail beats, and the more the rains fall.”

The name of that fabled bird which was said to come to life from its own ashes was Phœnix, which is the Greek word for palm, the name being doubtless given in allusion to the fact that the tree springs upward in spite of all hindrances. Very fittingly were palm branches

The Trees

carried in triumphal processions, in the entry of the King of kings into Jerusalem. This meant victory to the Jews. In this connection there is something pathetic in a copper coin which has come down to us from the first century. On one side is the head of the Emperor Vespasian, during whose reign Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus. On the other side is the representation of a poor female captive, of a Jewess, weeping under a palm-tree in sight of her master. The very Jewish symbol of victory was thus associated by the cruel Roman with a captivity which has lasted through nineteen centuries. But the palm-tree, rising erect above the bent form of the Jewish captive, speaks of triumph yet, when according to prophecy "all Israel shall be saved." Over every prostrate soul to-day, bowed down with sin and sorrow, the palm stands and says in the words of Jesus, "Look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh," and eventually there comes that triumphant scene in heaven of the glorified "with palms in their hands." This was the hopeful message to the holy family itself in that dark hour when compelled to flee the country by a tyrant's wrath. Beautiful among pictures is Correggio's "Flight into Egypt." Golden-haired angels put aside the branches of a palm sheltering the refugees, and smile sunnily through the leaves upon the Madonna and her child, who must have been cheered by the bright and lovely vision.

Biblical Nature Studies

This to those compelled to wander far from home and native land must have been as reassuring as that of Whittier is to us under similarly trying circumstances, and in the wider and more mysterious wanderings to which we may be subject through the strange shaping of human destinies by an overruling providence. The Quaker poet in "The Eternal Goodness" most comfortingly says:

"I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

Ultimately we all can become what the Bible terms "cedars of God." It is these that Ezekiel describes, not like those of stunted growth in the unfavorable climate of the Occident, but as they are in their native element, in the Orient, where, says the prophet, they are "exalted above all the trees of the field," while the "great eagle" alights in the "top" thereof. These are like the mammoth trees of California, like those seen by me near Santa Cruz, or like those at Mariposa in the approach to the Yosemite. Such were the famed "cedars of Lebanon." One of them in our day has been known to have a trunk nearly 16 feet in diameter. By counting the growths, the "annual concentric circles," it has been estimated by Thomson that some of them may "have been growing ever since the Flood." John Muir

The Trees

tells us of one giant Sequoia in the Sierras 325 feet high. A colossus of this kind usually does not begin to have branches till a height of 150 feet is reached. The same naturalist of the Pacific slope refers to one specimen having, four feet above the ground, a trunk something over 35 feet in diameter inside the bark, which itself is sometimes two feet thick. He counted the yearly wood-rings of some, and found them to be more than 4,000 years old. "These giants," he declared, though others reduce the period, "probably live 5,000 years or more."

Can we get any adequate conception of the age of such a tree? We try historic measurements. We talk of the landing of the Pilgrims in 1620, from which we seem immensely separated in time. We trace our way along till we come to the discovery of America by Columbus, and we stand awed before the flight of four centuries. We turn to English history, we recall the immortal Cromwell, and James the First who gave us the Bible in our long-accepted version; we remember Henry the Eighth who made England independent of Rome, and the Norman Conquest passes before our minds. In general European affairs we are not forgetful of the Reformation which revolutionized Church and State. We follow in imagination the thousands of Crusaders who poured into the Holy Land. We have thus swept over a thousand years, and we cannot help being impressed with such a stretch of time. And yet a millennium ago our

Biblical Nature Studies

sequoia or our cedar of Lebanon was not so much as nearing old age.

We proceed farther still toward antiquity. We read of Charlemagne and his splendid empire, of Mohammedanism in its long series of triumphs extending over three continents almost, of hordes of barbarians rolling down from the north and destroying the Roman Empire, of Constantine the Great substituting for the imperial eagles the resplendent cross which he thought he saw emblazoned in the sky, and we come to the birth of Christianity itself and a century beyond, when two thousand years have been traversed, but our tree then was only in its prime. We continue our journey along the path of history, and we take in empires, Roman, Grecian, Persian, and Assyrian. We are in the midst of the Punic or Carthaginian wars, and we hear the senate chamber at Rome re-echoing with Cato's "Carthago delenda est," Carthage must be destroyed. We see the celebrated Hannibal, who thundered at the gates of the eternal city. We become acquainted with Alexander the Great and with Demosthenes, with Solon and the seven wise men of Greece, with Socrates and Pericles and Homer. We learn about the romantic Cyrus the Great, about the Captivity in Babylon, and we pursue our course till we come to the reigns of David and Solomon, and to the Trojan war with the capture of the city by the wooden horse crammed with soldiers and admitted within the

The Trees

gates. Another millennium has fled, and yet our cedar or our sequoia even then had been watching for a thousand or perhaps two thousand years the procession of the centuries. If the Creator has endowed an insensible tree with life so long, we may be sure that man, made in his own image, with an intelligence which has accomplished so much, and with longings for immortality, is going to be longer-lived. Our leaf shall "not wither," we shall be "goodly cedars" for ever and evermore.

We have now spoken of the "trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall." What has been the effect upon us of our meditative stroll in this Scriptural forest? Fortunate are we if it has been as happy as Sidney Lanier has pictured it to have been on the Lord himself because of a similar experience:

"Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forspent, forspent;
* * * * * *
Out of the woods my Master went,
And he was well content."

But the most unique tree of all has so far been omitted, and has been reserved for mention last. Says Milton:

"Amidst them stood the tree of life,
High eminent, blooming ambrosial fruit
Of vegetable gold."

This is better characterized in the inspired Song of songs as follows:

Biblical Nature Studies

“As the apple tree among the trees of the wood,
So is my beloved among the sons.
I sat down under his shadow with great delight,
And his fruit was sweet to my taste.”

This is translated the apple tree, but the Hebrew word, say scholars, is the generic term for apple, quince, citron, orange, peach, and so forth; thus giving us, as has been said, a “succession of blossoms, fruit, and perfume.” It is all the fruit trees, with which we are familiar, thrown and combined into one, into a magnificent composite.

Verily this does surpass “all the trees of the wood.” It must be what John in his Revelation calls “the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” This must be indeed the soul’s beloved, must be he who alone is life, “who only hath immortality.” While we as cedars shall be kings, he as the tree of life shall be King of kings, and we shall sit under his grateful shade, and partake of his pleasant fruit, and we shall ever give him praise. The Psalmist’s words shall be fulfilled, “Then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy, before the Lord.” Isaiah’s prophecy, too, shall come true, “The mountains and the hills shall break forth . . . into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” In the Paradise above it shall be ours at last to join in the leafy chorus, in the new song before the throne.

V

AUTUMN LEAVES

V

AUTUMN LEAVES

The glory of the trees is their foliage, whose protection from the hot sun has ever been eagerly sought and gratefully enjoyed. At Athens the Academy where Plato taught was among the olive groves on the banks of the Cephissus, and the Lyceum where Aristotle lectured was among the plane-trees on the Ilissus. Our higher institutions of learning now, Harvard on her "yard" and Yale on her campus, try to have classic shades that are similar. It is in the spring when the leaves are thickest and most umbrageous. It is then that the birds, says the Psalmist, "sing among the branches." This is the season of which Wordsworth sings:

"One impulse from a *vernal* wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good
Than all the sages can."

Every one feels the inspiration of what Coleridge calls "the leafy month of June." Says Thomson of "the pleasing spring:"

"Echo the mountains round; the *forest* smiles;
And every sense, and every heart, is joy."

The air breathes with fragrance. It is a

Biblical Nature Studies

time of buttercups and daisies, of apple blossoms and meadow flowers. Nature is waking out of sleep. Everything is bursting into new life. Birds are nesting. Soft zephyrs kiss the earth. The green foliage comes out. Under such exhilarating circumstances, we cannot help being buoyant and cheerful. But when the fall comes, decay is seen on every side. The birds are going south. The wild geese give forth their plaintive notes, like Tennyson's dying swan which "loudly did lament," as

"The desolate creeks and pools among,
Were flooded over with eddying song."

The very breezes, especially on gray days, seem to sigh in the tree tops. The leaves become sere and yellow, and fall to the ground. The most marked difference between the spring and the autumn is due to this change in the foliage, from which a prophet draws the impressive lesson, "we all do fade as a leaf." Oliver Wendell Holmes spoke sadly of the time when he should become

"The last leaf upon the tree,"

and Byron said mournfully,

"My *days* are in the yellow leaf."

From another standpoint, however, a jubilant feeling is indicated by what we term "a riot of colors." We often try to secure wondrous effects along this line. The greatest dis-

Autumn Leaves

play of this kind ever seen by me was the decorative exhibition in Boston, when the returning hero of Manila Bay rode along, standing in his carriage and bowing to solid masses of people on this side and on that, while a continuous roar of applause marked his slow advance. The city was ablaze with colored lights, with illuminated flagships or Olympias, with painted scenes of the whole historic fleet, with the American eagle flying from its beak the stars and stripes in brilliant fire-works. Even in daylight streets and buildings were bright with rainbow hues. Flags floated from windows. Bunting of red, white and blue hung in graceful festoons everywhere. For whom was all this gorgeous make-up? For the now illustrious George Dewey, who on that May morning of 1898 sailed into a Philippine harbor, and in a forenoon without the loss of a ship or a man annihilated the Spanish fleet there sheltered and protected both by her own guns and by powerful shore batteries, though to no purpose as against the superb daring and skill of our American naval commander, whom as a consequence all delighted to honor on that occasion of his return. But a more magnificent display than that for this distinguished mariner is that of all nature every fall for every humblest person. Colors more lavish than the art of man can spread over a scene are those of the autumn over entire landscapes that are for us all made radiant. The leaves which burn with

Biblical Nature Studies

mingled fires, over which have been dashed by the heavenly artist such manifold colors, speak to us of joy and victory. We are reminded of what Moses witnessed at Mount Horeb. Every shrub aglow with color is a repetition of the miracle of the burning bush which he saw, all aflame yet not consumed. There is here the brightness not of the destructive fire but of the flame immortal in a divine luminosity. It is what can be characterized as a blaze of glory and triumph, and the thought is only that of gladness.

But in a different frame of mind we see the sadness of it all, of the leaves fairly showered down. Driving once from Florence to the adjacent heights of Fiesole, there was pointed out to me the locality made famous by these lines of Milton in his *Paradise Lost*:

“Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
In Vallombrosa, where the Etrurian shades
High overarched embower.”

We are taught here an opposite lesson, that we live our little life, and that for a while all is fair. But soon there comes the fading, and the withering; there comes the fate which Daniel tells us was decreed for Nebuchadnezzar in the midst of that monarch's prosperity: “Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, *shake off his leaves*, and scatter his fruit.”

This Oriental ruler of splendid fame is not the only one, who has thus been made to feel the vanity of life. Wolsey's oft-quoted soliloquy

Autumn Leaves

on fallen greatness, as given in Shakespeare, furnishes out of the personal experience of that celebrated Englishman a striking commentary on Daniel's prophecy regarding Nebuchadnezzar's end. Says the great Cardinal:

“This is the state of man: today he puts forth
The tender leaves of hopes; tomorrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honors thick upon him:
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost;
And,—when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a-ripening,—nips his root,
And then he falls, as I do.”

Frosted leaves, blasted hopes, that in one sense is the language of Autumn.

How soon we begin to fade! We no sooner come to our best, than decay sets in. We are fast passing away. In the springtime of life there is only hopefulness, but as we advance in age there comes a tinge of sadness, for we realize that our leaf is fading, and that it will soon fall. We rapidly mature in years, till we drop like the leaves. Such is our destiny according to the irrevocable laws of nature. Like autumn in the natural world is that in the human realm, except that in the latter the falling leaf is continuous. We are familiar with the song of the landing of the Pilgrims by Mrs. Hemans,

“The breaking waves dashed high
On a stern and rock-bound coast.”

Still more strikingly has she said,

“Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the North-wind's breath,
And stars to set;—but all,
Thou hast *all* seasons for thine own, O Death!”

Biblical Nature Studies

The generations follow one another in quick succession. One of Homer's heroes in the *Iliad* has most graphically set forth our mortality in lines which have been the admiration of centuries:

"Like the race of leaves
Is that of humankind. Upon the ground
The winds strew one year's leaves; the sprouting grove
Puts forth another brood, that shoot and grow
In the spring season. So it is with man:
One generation grows while one decays."

The falling leaf, however, speaks a various language. It testifies farther to the fearfulness of coming to our end without the Christian hope. Souls should tremble at the dread prospect of drawing near to eternity. We read in *Leviticus*, "The sound of a driven leaf shall chase them." There is such a thing as being haunted by a vague and uncomfortable fear of the future, by the dramatist's "dread of something *after* death." If one is alone in an unbroken forest, which he knows to be full of wild beasts, and especially in the stillness of the midnight hour, he is startled by the fluttering leaf. Says a Scottish poet:

"For now the leaf
Incessant rustles from the mournful grove;
Oft startling such as, studious, walk below,
And slowly circles through the waving air."

The dry leaf, blown toward one with the peculiar crackling noise of autumn, might easily frighten him into flight, and he would thus be chased by the "sound of a driven leaf."

Autumn Leaves

Now there is no place where a person will be so much alone and in a night so dark, as in the shadowy vale. There fears and doubts often start up like rustling leaves to disturb the soul's composure. We sometimes say with Bryant:

“The melancholy days are come, the saddest of the year,
Of wailing winds and naked woods and meadows brown and
sere.

Heaped in the hollows of the grove, the autumn leaves lie
dead;

They rustle to the eddying gust, and to the rabbit's tread.”

But sadder than the fall of nature is the autumn of a life, which has been blasted by sin, till the air is full of the flying leaves of guilty memories which have the taint of a moral blight. To persons of such lives there is frequently sent “a faintness into their heart,” as the inspired writer says, while he adds the significant clause, “and the sound of a driven leaf shall chase them.” The whirling autumn foliage speaks of sad bewilderment at life's close. We all must fade, but we need not have at the last this spirit of fearfulness.

The leaves inculcate a further lesson. They speak of divine comfort and protection. Job asks, “Wilt thou harass a driven leaf?” The patriarch meant to say, that the Father's tenderness was such as not to injure in the least the crisp leaf even, blown hither and thither by the fall winds. So fragile a thing as that is the object of his loving care. Much more does he appreciate our frailties:

Biblical Nature Studies

“For he knoweth our frame;
He remembereth that we are dust.”

The promise is, “A bruised reed shall he not break.” He does let the storm come, and does let it sweep round us and over us with such force, that we are as helpless before the terrific gale, as the autumn leaf before the wintry blast. But the Almighty does not forsake us in the tempest. He is in the midst of it, guarding us with infinite compassion, and we are perfectly safe, for he does not, we are assured, “harass a driven leaf.” Not a sparrow falls to the ground without his notice. He throws shelter around the falling leaf, making it descend softly and with scarcely a flutter to its resting place. He likewise takes care of the trusting spirit

“In every high and stormy gale.”

The Fall foliage again points to something beyond the present, if there is an inner principle of life. Isaiah refers to trees “whose stock remaineth, when they are felled,” such are the words of the prophet who continues, “so the holy seed is the stock thereof.” The marginal reading is, “whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed is the substance thereof.” Trees may be felled, may have their branches lopped off, and certainly may lose their leaves, and yet not be really killed. They are not dead, for they sprout and leaf again the next summer. In the summer-

Autumn Leaves

land of heaven, those *persons*, who have in them the holy seed, who have in them the substance of spiritual vitality, though sadly stripped here below of boughs and foliage, become up there trees of life, with branches renewed, and with leaves that never wither. In other words, the Autumn with its apparent deadness may contain at the same time the promise of life to come. As Job says,

“There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again,
And that the tender branch thereof will not cease.
Though the root thereof wax old in the earth,
And the stock thereof die in the ground;
Yet through the scent of water it will bud,
And put forth boughs like a plant.”

So will it be with those who have within them eternal life. The autumn does not harm such, “whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves,” whose immortal spirit abides, when they shuffle off this mortal coil. “The trees of the Lord,” to use an expression of the Psalmist, are sure to leaf and bloom again in the sweet fields of Eden. So that in one sense the fading leaf is only a sign of ripeness, suggestive of decay to be sure, but also of a more glorious future.

There is a similar thought in the Scriptural lines,

“Thou shalt come to the grave in a full age,
Like as a shock of corn cometh in its season.”

That is, there is the ripeness of autumn. The

Biblical Nature Studies

falling leaf is not so dreary, when the tree itself is not dead, whose substance is in it, when it casts its leaves. Coupled with the melancholy is the comfort of autumn, whose "days fill one with pleasant sadness," said Henry Ward Beecher, who went on to observe, "How sweet a pleasure is there in sadness! It is not sorrow; it is not despondency; it is not gloom; it is one of the moods of joy. At any rate I am very happy, and yet it is sober, and very sad happiness. It is the shadow of joy upon my soul."

Bryant, too, speaks of these mingled feelings produced in man's heart by transfigured nature:

"For his gayer hours
She has a voice of gladness, and a smile
And eloquence of beauty; and she glides
Into his darker musings, with a mild
And healing sympathy, that steals away
Their sharpness ere he is aware."

Longfellow also speaks of "a sober gladness," which he portrays in lines we never tire of quoting:

"There is a beautiful spirit breathing now
Its mellow richness on the clustered trees,
And, from a beaker full of richest dyes,
Pouring new glory on the autumn woods.
* * * * *

"O what a glory doth this world put on
For him who, with a fervent heart, goes forth
Under the bright and glorious sky, and looks
On duties well performed, and days well spent!
For him the wind, ay, and the yellow leaves,
Shall have a voice, and give him eloquent teachings.
He shall so hear the solemn hymn that Death
Has lifted up for all, that he shall go
To his long resting-place without a tear."

Autumn Leaves

He shall be garnered above, because his character will have fully developed. He shall come to his end like ripened shock of corn, like matured autumn leaf. He shall be like him of whom Dryden sang:

“Of no distemper, of no blast he died,
But fell like autumn fruit that mellowed long,
Even wondered at because he dropped no sooner.”

VI

TREASURIES OF THE SNOW

VI

TREASURIES OF THE SNOW

Regularly succeeding the autumn is the winter, which some are disposed to regard as an alien realm, with no suggestion of God and goodness, but only of what is bad and undesirable. We feel some sympathy with the Greeks, who had the desolate and forbidding kingdom presided over by Boreas, whom they represented to be surly, blowing his horn which expelled chilling, northern blasts. Even Thomson, who generally saw the divine in all the seasons, said of Polar regions,

“Here Winter holds his unrejoicing court;
And through his airy hall the loud misrule
Of driving tempest is forever heard:
Here the grim tyrant meditates his wrath;
Here arms his winds with all-subduing frost;
Moulds his fierce hail, and treasures up his snows,
With which he now oppresses half the globe.”

But this poet saw another side to the matter, when he pictured the pure joyousness of the snowy season, as he portrayed a farmer going forth after the following fashion:

“His dog attends him. Close behind his heel
Now creeps he slow, and now with many a frisk,
Wide-scampering, snatches up the drifted snow
With ivory teeth, or ploughs it with his snout;
Then shakes his powdered coat and barks for joy.”

Biblical Nature Studies

All hearts respond to the poetic sentiment,

“Ringing, swinging, dashing they go
Over the crest of the beautiful snow.”

But of something deeper than this must the snow speak in view of a question which Job asks, namely, “Hast thou entered the treasuries of the snow?” It was from the Æolian cave that Grecian mythology represented the winds to rush forth. Scripture gives a similar idea, when it says of God, “He bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.” The conception seems to be that of a vast storehouse, from whose chambers the blasts are expelled. The patriarch is equally pictorial in his question. He may have imagined something like the crystal palace which Montreal sometimes has had, a splendid structure of clear ice, built of block upon block of frozen snow and water, and, when lighted by electrical appliances, and when filled with the wealth and fashion of the Canadian city, presenting a fairylike scene in its gorgeous interior.

What was in the mind of the sacred writer? He may have conceived of regions of perpetual snow, like Greenland’s “icy mountains,” of which we sing with missionary enthusiasm, or like the highest summits of the Alps, where avalanches are sometimes set in motion by so little a thing as the concussion or vibration of air caused by the sound of a human voice in the mountain solitude; was he calling attention to

Treasuries of the Snow

any such significant fact? He may have had before him a scene like that in Whittier's "Snow-Bound:"

"We cut the solid whiteness through,
And, where the drift was deepest, made
A tunnell walled and overlaid
With dazzling crystal."

He may have understood that the snow falls in perfectly formed crystals of almost endless variety; by inspiration he may have known what has been revealed to modern science by microscopic examination; he may have been trying to stimulate the mind of man to pry into these charming secrets of nature, and to appreciate the delicate, snowy gems. Had he ever witnessed the phenomena of red and green snow, occasionally observed in certain altitudes Alpine and Arctic, and was he mystified by what is now recognized as vegetable organisms coloring the snow, the red and green being, we are informed, "one and the same plants in different stages of growth, the green being probably the riper;" was it by such strange phenomena that he was struck? He may have had the thought of the author of today, who writes interestingly of the various forms of snow under the fascinating title of "Cloud Crystals." He could not have heard of snow a mile and a half deep, over which depth Lieutenant Peary, in a lecture once listened to by me, said he believed he had walked in his explorations about the North Pole which he finally discovered. Perhaps Job could have said with Longfellow:

Biblical Nature Studies

“Out of the bosom of the Air,
Out of the cloud-folds of her garments shaken,
Over the woodlands brown and bare,
Over the harvest-fields forsaken,
Silent, and soft, and slow
Descends the snow.”

It is quite certain that the patriarch would have watched with interest the transformation pictured by another poet:

“Through the hushed air the whitening shower descends,
At first thin wavering; till at last the flakes
Fall broad and wide and fast, dimming the day
With a continual flow. The cherished fields
Put on their winter robe of purest white.”

He would have been fascinated at the sight of what President Hitchcock of Amherst College once pictured after this manner in a lecture on the “Coronation of Winter:” “If the twigs of every tree and shrub and spire had been literally covered with diamonds of the purest water, and largest known size, say an inch in diameter, they would not, I am sure, have poured upon the eye in the sunlight a more dazzling splendor.”

Ceasing from farther conjecture, we come to what we know was originally being set forth by the patriarch in his suggestive question. He was greatly afflicted, physically, in that he was one mass of painful sores; pecuniarily, in that he had lost all his property; and worst of all his whole family had been swept away by sudden death, while his pretended friends who came with their consolations proved to be “miserable comforters.” As a consequence his faith

Treasures of the Snow

in an overruling providence was put to a severe test. He could not comprehend God's moral government. He could not sound its mysterious depths. Well, what if he could not? It was not his to know but to believe, not his to rebel but to submit. That was the lesson finally taught him so impressively out of the whirlwind. God recounted the mysteries of nature, from "the cluster of the Pleiades" to the "wil- lows of the brook;" from the horse whose neck was clothed with "the quivering mane" to the sea monster making "the deep to boil like a pot;" and, among the things mentioned, was the snow, and Job was asked if he had a clear comprehension of that. Had he entered its treasures, did he understand the secret of its formation and descent? Now if he was ignorant of one of the most common of natural phenomena, as he was, how could he expect to fathom the mysteries of the divine purpose?

When *we* are staggered by God's dealings with the children of men, when we cannot see why there should be such affliction and suffering on earth, we are not to murmur, but we are to accept with meekness what has been divinely decreed. That is one of the spiritual lessons conveyed by the snow, into whose treasures we have not entered any more than into the secrets of God. The Biblical assurance, that all things work together for good, bringing to the humble and devout "an eternal weight of glory," should be sufficient. Simple faith, and not sus-

Biblical Nature Studies

picious questioning, should mark our attitude toward the Omniscient. It is ours not to complain but to trust.

But the snow has other lessons; we have yet seen only one of the many sides of the crystal. Probably all have had the experience of Job in unsatisfactory earthly friendships, human sympathy failing in the time of greatest need. In illustration of this he says:

“My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook,
As the channel of brooks that pass away;
Which are black by reason of the ice,
And wherein the *snow* hideth itself:
What time they wax warm, they vanish;
When it is hot, they are consumed out of their place.”

That is to say, his friends were like a mountain brook, making a great bubbling noise in the spring when swollen by dissolving snow, but in the heat of summer the uncertain stream dries up. Exactly thus mere human friendship will disappoint at the last. It may be refreshing enough in the springtime of life, but when we are smitten and scorched by summer heat, when we are called upon to go through some terrible ordeal, some conflict of soul, some great spiritual struggle, then the sympathy of those about us, even if manifested, does not satisfy. It is good so far as it goes, but it fails us just where we need it most, to set us at rest with our Creator. At that point it vanishes like the brook wherein is snow, being exceedingly evanescent. The spring freshet of brief earthly friendship is not what we want, but the last

Treasures of the Snow

favor of God, the peace which passeth understanding, which floweth like a river full and deep to all eternity.

And yet, to take a step in advance, human friendship is not to be lightly esteemed. It has its value, and is capable of accomplishing much, when it has the quality of Christian faithfulness. There is another side of the crystal which we are examining through the microscope of Scripture in the proverb which says:

“As the cold of *snow* in the time of harvest,
So is a faithful messenger to them that send him;
For he refresheth the soul of his masters.”

A cooling drink *is* refreshing to the hot and weary harvester. It would seem from this that ice water was an ancient luxury. At least in the age of Solomon, there was the cold of snow in the harvest-field. Like such a draft of water to the laborer, is the faithful gospel messenger, who is always found in his place, who can be depended upon for any designated duty. Of such material are those who in every Church are called the faithful few. Unless necessarily detained, they are invariably present in God's house to worship, helping to give the inspiration of numbers. They are regularly there to cheer the possibly flagging spirit of the leader. They rally round him with warm hearts and willing hands, with earnest prayer and active service. They are always ready with their testimonies, with their inspiring messages, with their glad tidings, with their words fitly spoken

Biblical Nature Studies

to do good everywhere. They may not be able to say or to do much, but they do not drop out of the ranks, and they do not excuse themselves from all work, because they may possess only the single talent. They use what they have. They hold up the hands of their Moses whoever he may be. They perhaps speak a solitary word of encouragement to some fainting soul, they give a stranger a friendly greeting, and they have done no great thing, but they shall not lose their reward, for they have shown the praiseworthy quality of faithfulness, they have given "the cup of cold water," which the Lord very properly commended, for

"As the cold of snow in the time of harvest,
So is a faithful messenger."

There is needed more of such Christian faithfulness to revive drooping spirits, to infuse fresh courage into those bearing the chief responsibility, into those who are weary and heavy laden, who are well-nigh overcome by the heat of the day, by trial and temptation. There is too little of religious helpfulness in the world. We go on our own way, bearing our own burdens and carrying our own sorrows, and too rarely speaking of the comforts of the gospel and of the refreshing promises. We too intermittently utter the good cheer which is so helpful, we do not as we should simply drop our word here and there.

But will the little that we can say have any effect? The answer to that question turns to

Treasures of the Snow

us another side of the crystal which we are considering. Will any feeble words of ours spoken for the Master avail aught? What says the snow? Isaiah replies, "As the rain cometh down, and the *snow* from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void." We are all aware that the rain causes the earth to produce, but does the snow have a similar influence on the soil? That is what is implied by the prophet. The farmer, too, testifies that better crops generally follow a winter, wherein the ground has been heavily mantled with snow. Cyclopædias state that the earth is thus protected, being kept warmer, and vegetation is not killed by excessive freezing. So that it is an agricultural and scientific as well as Scriptural fact, that not only rain but snow falls to some purpose.

Likewise a word uttered for Christ is not lost. It may seem cold as snow, but there is the warmth of heaven in it, and when it falls on the heart, it makes that spiritual soil soft and fruitful, and sooner or later there come the results, the summer harvests. We may have to say with the sacred poet,

"Weak is the effort of my heart,
And *cold* my warmest thought,"

but through that natural coldness of ours the

Biblical Nature Studies

fire from above can be conducted. A prism of *ice* can be made to focalize the sun's rays with such power as to burn the object beneath, at a definite point where the beams are concentrated, concentrated even by a cold medium. Thus it is with the word uttered for the Lord. It is like the snow, whose coldness seems unsuited to impart warmth, but it warms nevertheless. We may be very prisms of ice in comparison with what we should be, "cold our warmest thought," but if we only catch and transmit the rays of the Sun of righteousness, warmth will come out of coldness, hearts will feel the divine heat sent through us as instrumentalities.

We must not forget, however, that we ourselves need to renew our spiritual strength. We personally should go to the fountain of all supply. Are we drinking of the living waters? We turn the snow crystal for another view of the matter. It is Jeremiah who says, "Shall the snow of Lebanon fail from the rock of the field? or shall the cold waters that flow down from afar be dried up? For my people have forgotten me." Lebanon was covered with snow the year round, and down this mountain dashed fresh, sparkling water, cold as the snow from which it melted, and it leaped unceasingly from under the rock of the field. Will this ever fail? asks the prophet. Certainly not, and no more will the Almighty, whom yet people forget. They hew out for themselves "cisterns,

Treasures of the Snow

broken cisterns that can hold no water," forsaking the "fountain of living waters," forsaking the smitten Rock of Ages whence gush the never failing streams. They abandon the cool waters of life that flow down from afar, proceeding clear as crystal out of the throne, and "seek their happiness," another has said, "in channels of their own digging." It is folly to try to find all our enjoyment in the fleeting pleasures of earth or in its equally transient possessions. These do not satisfy our deepest nature, our thirst of soul. We need to drink from the "wells of salvation," artesian wells, fed not by the watershed of any earthly range of hills, blue or otherwise, but of the "green hill far away." We need to go directly to Mount Zion, from which issues a perennial river of snow-cold water, which is to make glad the city above forever. We are to follow this to its fountain head beyond the sea of glass, where it starts under the rainbow that is like unto emerald. The cisterns which we are hewing down here below will soon all be broken, if they are not already failing us, and we cannot seek too soon "the cold waters that flow down from afar," as it were, from "the snow of Lebanon."

But one may feel unworthy to come to such purity. He may be conscious of guilt. What light does the snow crystal flash upon us here? It is Job again who says,

"I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent.
I shall be condemned;

Biblical Nature Studies

Why then do I labor in vain?
If I wash myself with *snow* water,
And make my hands never so clean.”

There may be all the cleansing qualities of the softest water, of melted snow, but even that cannot remove some stains. What says Lady Macbeth? “Out, damned spot! out, I say! * * * who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him? * * * will these hands ne’er be clean? * * * Here’s the smell of blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.” Macbeth himself cried out in despair,

“Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand?”

She had said, “A little water clears us of this deed,” but she soon learned her mistake. She could have said with Job,

“I shall be condemned,
* * * * *
If I wash myself with *snow* water.”

The stains of sin are indelible, and cannot be removed even by snow water.

Nevertheless there need not be hopelessness. We turn the crystal once more, and we get the happiest effect of any yet, there is the radiance of divine pardon. We read in Holy Writ, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as *snow*.” We can through penitence have the abundant pardon, which both forgives and forgets, which makes our record

Treasures of the Snow

clean, and gives us the white robes of righteousness. With what force the question recurs, "Hast thou entered the treasures of the snow?" There is this sweetest of all lessons, this divinest of all secrets, that we can be washed whiter than snow by cleansing grace.

VII
BY THE SEA

VII

BY THE SEA

SOME prefer the mountains, while others choose the ocean. A combination of both was for fifteen seasons mine at Southwest Harbor on Mt. Desert. This celebrated island resort, with its harbors of Southwest and Northeast and Seal and Bar, is unique in that directly from the salt water rise the everlasting hills. There are also ponds and lakes easily accessible to visitors. Then the particular cottage, where the writer was annually domiciled, had the surroundings of the quiet country, with a green meadow sloping down to the tree-fringed shore. There was the humming of bees on shrubbery at the door. There was the low, rhythmic murmur of insect life. There was the sound of human voices here and there across the fields. There was the clatter of the mowing machine on the land, and there was the swish of the water cut by passing steamer, or gallant sailboat, or stately yacht. There was the cawing of the crow. There was the ringing challenge of the chanticleer at a sufficient distance to lend enchantment, the "cock's shrill clarion" sometimes coming clear over from Northeast, a mile or more across the water, while his feminine

Biblical Nature Studies

partner in business cackled her assertive claims as to the choice contribution she was making for the table of summer boarders. There was the strident salute of the white sea-gull, winging its way gracefully along against a background of dark firs toward the Duck Islands. There was the protesting chatter of the squirrel, objecting to your hammock in the edge of the woods. There was the sweet melody of the song sparrow, and there was the evening matin of robin redbreast, these being surpassed only by the musical bobolink of New York State, and perhaps by California's meadow lark with its liquid notes and the mocking bird with its rollicking harmonies continuing often into the night. All such country and seashore sounds were a delight to the ear, and we could understand why those Trojan soldiers, of whom Euripides tells us, stopped in the early morning to listen to the nightingale singing on the banks of the Simois, and to the bleating of a flock of sheep on the top of Mt. Ida, and to a shepherd's pipe sending forth its strains on the dewy air.

With every thing of this kind the Master was pleased. He even called attention to the brooding fowl, the clucking hen, calling her young under her wings. He loved the mountains, and more than once retired to their restful solitude. He passed thirty years of his life at Nazareth, which itself was at a considerable altitude. From the summit of the hill on whose slopes the village was built, there was a widely

By the Sea

extended view. To the north was snow-capped Hermon, to the east Tabor verdant to the top, to the west the blue Mediterranean with white sails, and to the south the fertile plain of Esdraelon. But of such fair and sublime scenes Christ at length took leave. "And leaving Nazareth," says the record, "he came and dwelt in Capernam, which is by the sea." This lake of Gennesaret was henceforth to be his favorite resort. Often was he to stroll down to the water's edge. He went on missionary tours, but he regularly returned to the seaside. There he found his first disciples, mending and washing their nets. There he called Matthew the publican. On Galilee's billows he slept peacefully, while all others were frightened at the violence of the storm that arose. From a boat rocking on its rippling surface, he preached to the multitude on the shore. On its beach one of his appearances after his resurrection took place. He was thoroughly at home "by the sea."

There are those of dull soul who catch no inspiration, as he did, from nature, and from that finest manifestation of it as seen in the ocean. When Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy, who were as inseparable as Charles and Mary Lamb,—when they and Coleridge were enjoying the beauties of nature in the since famous Lake district of England, they were suspected by the country people there of being traitors or smugglers or perhaps lunatics. The

Biblical Nature Studies

poet and his sister were actually compelled on this account to change their abode, the owner of the house they had rented refusing to let them have it any longer. As evidence against Wordsworth, one of the villagers said, "We have all met him tramping away toward the sea. Would any man in his senses take all that trouble to look at a parcel of water?" What lack there is in persons who can see in the mighty ocean only "a parcel of water." It is like a nation seeing in a solemn treaty only "a scrap of paper." As has been said in another connection, "Breathes there a man with soul so dead."

Even Byron of irreligious mind could say appreciatively,

"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,"

while also he saw in the boundless deep an "image of eternity," and likewise a vast and "glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form glasses itself." One can hardly express the feelings that surge through the breast in the presence of the expansive ocean. He involuntarily exclaims with Tennyson,

"Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me."

How much of mystery the ocean suggests!
One thinks of the deluge described by the Bible,

By the Sea

of lost Atlantis which Plato says was located out in the Atlantic beyond the pillars of Hercules, and which was said to have been submerged with all its wicked inhabitants. One recalls that oldest version of the flood first deciphered in 1913 from exceedingly minute characters on a tablet only seven inches square. This is now owned by the University of Pennsylvania, and it dates back at least to the time of Hammurabi and of Abraham about 2200 years before Christ, and perhaps 400 years earlier still, thus antedating by 1500 to 2000 years the account of the catastrophe found in the excavated library of Assurbanipal at Nineveh in the seventh century before our era, and revealed to the modern world by George Smith in the last century. To such musings does the rolling deep give rise regarding cataclysmic happenings millenniums ago, as witnessed by writings sacred, classic and Oriental.

One wonders again if the theory of some is correct, that the configuration of continents and mountain ranges is such as to indicate, that the Pacific Ocean now covers the original dry land on which Adam and Eve were placed, and upon which the race was started on its career. Then there is the Polar Sea, is it open or is it frozen solid? To determine that many have gone on voyages where the suffering from hunger has been such, that human beings have cut the flesh from their dead fellows for bait with which to catch shrimps in Arctic waters,

Biblical Nature Studies

until finally Peary has solved the mystery in the discovery of the North Pole.

A former President of Boston University, Dr. Warren, has started another inquiry by writing a book to prove that the North Pole is where the Garden of Eden was. The flaming sword, appointed by Jehovah forever to hinder reentrance into this Paradise, was the girdle of perpetual snow and ice that so long blocked progress northward, and that henceforth must always prevent tropical, Edenic conditions there. With such thoughts trooping through the mind, one can say with Longfellow:

“Ah! what pleasant visions haunt me
As I gaze upon the sea,
All the old romantic legends,
All my dreams come back to me.”

We cannot help querying, if the most fanciful ideas may not contain more of truth than we sometimes imagine.

The ocean has not yet yielded up all its secrets. It still awakens inquiry, as it did when Columbus sailed forth on his apparently foolhardy explorations, which after all turned out so successfully, in the enlargement of knowledge, in the discovery of continents, in the opening up of regions to provide comfortable homes for the crowded millions of the old world, and in the finding of islands ultimately to become the possession of a great nation that was to grow up on the western hemisphere, and that eventually was to humiliate the Spanish government

By the Sea

which sent the discoverer forth. What further disclosures regarding the briny deep are to be made to those having the inquiring spirit of the Genoese mariner? Scientists, with their deep sea dredging, have not yet revealed all of the ocean depths. They inform us that it covers nearly three-fourths of the surface of the globe, leaving only a little over one-fourth of real earth, and they of course have not explored thoroughly such a mass of water.

With all our increased light on ancient Neptune's realm, we continue to feel awed in the presence of the still recognized mysteries of the ocean. We realize with Job that only God understands all, and that his knowledge alone is perfect. We can almost hear the Almighty's challenge to the patriarch, thrown down likewise to each of us,

“Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea?
Or hast thou walked in the recesses of the deep?”

In other words, the ocean impresses us with our ignorance and littleness, and with the greatness and wisdom of God. It seems to tell us that we are finite, and that he is infinite. In short, it stirs within us religious emotions and sentiments.

With so much in general, we will now walk along the shore for different views, that will suggest more specific lessons. We cannot tarry long at any one point, we must be brief in our reflections.

Note for one thing how the ocean heaves and

Biblical Nature Studies

rolls. It rarely is quiet, and in fact never is. It seems filled with the very spirit of unrest. It seems like a great, panting monster imbued with life, and Byron, you recollect, talks about laying his hand on the mane of the huge creature. As you watch its heavy breathing, as you listen to its groans that in breakers sound like thunder, you almost wish that you could still its throbbing heart, and its restless movements. You half pity it, as if it must be tired out. And yet your sympathy is sometimes mingled with disgust, as you see it belching into the air and depositing upon the beach all manner of uncleanness. The filth of city sewers it rolls as a sweet morsel under its tongue. It swallows with a gurgling noise the human corpse, and then spews it forth with slimy weeds upon the sand, over which is strewn all conceivable refuse.

With all this in mind, how forcibly come to us Isaiah's words, "The wicked are like the troubled sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." What a striking picture the prophet thus gives us of the ungodly! They have no real composure of soul. They have the restlessness of unsatisfied natures. From their innermost being are evolved all sorts of sinful thoughts and desires, and they might well put their hands upon their mouths like lepers, and cry, "Unclean! unclean!" They need the One who is from above to purify the

By the Sea

secret springs of action, and to calm the turbulent spirit.

We proceed along the shore, and the ocean appears to us in another light. The suicide will stand alone in the dark on some dock, looking down into the gloomy waters, and revolving unspeakable intentions. One plunge, he thinks, and oblivion of life's sins and sorrows will follow. The great deep thus speaks of forgetfulness. Lost at sea means gone forever. Many a vessel, with precious freightage, has disappeared never to rise from the watery grave, till the sea gives up its dead. More than one has gazed over the fathomless waters, and sighed for a burial therein of all that is gross in his nature. He would like to part eternally with the stains upon his character. But he is afraid that the "damned spots" will not "out." He is like Macbeth who felt that all the waters of old ocean would not cleanse his hand when blood-stained with murder. He on the contrary under the scourgings of a guilty conscience cried out in an agony of fear,

"This my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red."

Shakespeare well depicts the terribleness of an outraged conscience, and the Bible equally portrays the exceeding sinfulness of sin, but the Christian's religion, unlike the dramatist's philosophy, does testify to the efficacy of the ocean, under certain conditions, in removing moral

Biblical Nature Studies

stains. The inspired Micah says of God, "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." This is a very sweet reminder by the seaside of entire forgiveness. God does both forgive and forget. Do any long to have the imperfect and guilty past as completely forgotten, as though it lay at the bottom of the ocean? If they are penitent and believing, their sins will be cast into the depths of the sea, to rise up against them no more to all eternity. So that the ocean speaks to us not only of mire and dirt and wickedness, but also of pardon and purity and peace.

Advancing a little farther along the shore, another feature of the ocean appears. Do you see the white caps tossed lightly up? These foamy waves are caused by an upspringing breeze. The direction in which they go depends upon the quarter from which the wind blows. They are mere surface billows, with broken crests, and they do not reach down to the heart of the ocean. They change their course with every rising gale. There are persons whose religion is of that description. They have what James calls faith without works. They do not hold steadily on in the way they started. They are "carried about," says Paul, "with every wind of doctrine." They are not stable and reliable. They run after every religious novelty, they do not stay anchored anywhere. They attend the services of the sanctuary for a while, and then they drop out, or at least become very

By the Sea

irregular. They cannot be classed as among the standbys. They are not steadfast.

What, according to Scripture, are such like? What Biblical illustration do we get of them, as we stand by the ocean? The apostle James compares such a person to the "surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed." While, therefore, people should be Christians, they should not consent to be these surface waves caused by the wind, going now in one direction and then in another. They should rather be like the tide, which reaches to the very center of the ocean, and which, from whatever quarter the wind blows, moves ever shoreward. There is something impressive in the steady on-moving of a tidal wave. Nothing can turn it from the beach, toward which it swells in majesty and strength. In our religious life we are not to be like the "surge of the sea driven by the wind," but we are to be like the deep undercurrent, like the mighty tide itself, always advancing, advancing, toward the shining shore, and there dissolving in glory.

Once more, the sea speaks of breakers, where there is a chance for its full sweep. The ocean outside of the sheltered harbor thunders warning. When we consider its vastness, three times as extensive as the dry land, we can hardly see why it does not overleap its bounds and engulf every thing. Professor William B. Carpenter tells us that "the average height of the whole land of the globe above the sea-level

Biblical Nature Studies

certainly does not exceed 1,000 feet." That is not a very great height to surmount. What desolation would be wrought, if the deep should burst its bonds! Sometimes it does overflow large districts with appalling results. Standing on a long stretch of sandy beach, you wonder what there is to hinder it from sweeping far beyond your position, and sometimes it does catch the wayfarer. You tremble when you realize what disaster such a bulk of water could carry. And it does bulk large, for the oceans are not only big but deep, so deep that after a descent of 600 feet there is absolute darkness, a blackness like pitch. Their average depth is two and a half miles, and there are marine abysses five and even six miles deep lacking only a few feet. Into one of these oceanic depressions Mount Everest, the highest of the Himalayas and of the earth, could be sunk, while yet water would roll over the lofty peak half a mile deep. With such figures for measurement, we nevertheless can form no adequate conception of the aqueous force that ordinarily is held in check, and that yet occasionally breaks loose with paralyzing effects.

We cannot forget the dykes of Holland. We remember having read in history how the Netherlands have been repeatedly inundated; in 1277 when forty-four villages were destroyed; ten years later when 80,000 persons lost their lives; in 1570, when notwithstanding the vast artificial embankments of timber and iron and

By the Sea

granite, notwithstanding watchmen to patrol day and night, the ocean broke through, floating vessels back into the country to be entangled in the tops of trees and houses, while far and wide in an angry sea struggled hopelessly animals and a great mass of humanity, and 100,000 human beings perished.

With such tragic facts in memory, we pity the fate of the impenitent and incorrigible sinner, of whom Jeremiah in his Lamentations says, "Thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee?" What consternation will be theirs who are caught in the swelling of the Jordan unprepared to meet their God, unreconciled to their Maker. Indescribable will be their dismay, when the Psalmist's words are fulfilled, "Thou carriest them away as with a flood," and no flood will equal that whose "breach is great like the sea." We thus hear the breakers, the thunders of warning, as we walk "by the sea." On the other hand, if any have the great Friend as a helper in the time of trouble, in the overwhelming flood, they can and will have the undisturbed and serene confidence of the Psalmist, who said he would not "fear,"

"Though the mountains be moved in the heart of the seas;
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."

In the midst of all will be the assurance of being soon where "the sea is no more," that is, in its destructive capacity, where there is only a peaceful ocean, preeminently the *Pacific*, even

Biblical Nature Studies

the “glassy sea like unto crystal” before the throne. There is a celestial seaside by which we can walk, while we sing our triumph song:

“Hark! the sound of holy voices
Chanting at the crystal sea,
Alleluia, alleluia,
Alleluia, Lord, to thee.”

VIII

FISHING EXPERIENCES

VIII

FISHING EXPERIENCES

FISHING has been a diversion or an employment in all ages. In my boyhood it was a recreation along a mountain brook, and the rich reward was a string of fine trout, a forked branch of willow being strung with speckled beauties. Every heart stirs to the poetic delineation:

“ There throw, nice judging, the delusive fly;
And, as you lead it round in artful curve,
With eye attentive mark the springing game.”

On the high seas fishing is a serious occupation for thousands, who furnish no small percentage of the world's food supply. The first disciples were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee.

Among the symbols of early Christianity, portrayed in the catacombs and elsewhere, were not only the dove and anchor but preeminently the fish. There is a famous acrostic which is very significant. The Greek word for fish, *ἰχθύς*, consists of the initial letters in the Greek sentence, *Ἰησοῦς Χριστός Θεοῦ Υἱός Σωτήρ*, Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour. These initials, therefore, worn on the person, or the representation of the *ἰχθύς* itself on some design that was carried

Biblical Nature Studies

as an adornment, would be like the C. E. monogram on a gold pin, of which Christian Endeavorers today are proud. It was really a profession of faith in the divine Lord. Believers in the mystic *Ixθύς* were themselves "little fishes," according to the great Latin Church Father, Tertullian, of the latter half of the second and of the early part of the third century. He once said, "We, little fishes, after the image of our *Ixθύς*, Jesus Christ, are born in the water." Because of such associations, there is a fisherman's ring, of which historical mention is made as long as nearly seven centuries ago. It is of gold, with a representation of St. Peter in a boat, fishing. This for generations at least has been placed on the finger of every newly-elected Pope, signifying, like the ordinary bishop's ring, a marriage to the Church. Whether this venerable relic was the original possession of Peter or not, it might well have been owned by that apostle, for he was a fisherman, and he was commissioned to "catch men." The New Testament gives three of his fishing experiences.

The first time, at Christ's command he launched out into the deep, soon to find his net breaking with a great multitude of fishes, enough to fill two boats. Then and there, with the glittering spoil in full sight, he was called to be a fisher of men. He had already been called by Jesus on the banks of the Jordan, where he heard the Baptist's testimony, but he

Fishing Experiences

had not yet given up his old occupation. Now, however, there was to be a change; henceforth he was to cast only the gospel net. A higher type of the piscatorial art was to be his. By means of the material he was led on to the spiritual, and his was a common experience.

When the Master met the woman of Samaria at the well he asked her for a drink, and the sparkling beverage being the uppermost thought in the mind, it was not long before he was telling her of the living water. The Magi, who gave themselves to the study of the stars, found Jesus by means of a star. The woman at the well and the magician of the east were each led to the Messiah by the material object which was especially appropriate. Many a one nowadays is made a follower of the Master in a similar way.

The farmer knows from personal experience, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;" what is put in the ground comes out, only in greater abundance. So he feels that it must be religiously; sowing the wind will bring a harvest of the same, only increased till it becomes the whirlwind. By this argument *ad hominem*, by this natural sowing, he is persuaded to cherish the supernatural seed. The business man likewise is reached according to his nature. He is given to balancing accounts, to determining the profit and loss, and by and by he realizes that there is one account which he has not yet balanced, or rather he runs up the

Biblical Nature Studies

two columns of life and death, and he discovers that the latter overruns. He is startled, and wonders if he has calculated according to the right rule. He reads the rule slowly over, "What doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life," lose his soul? That is the basis on which he made his calculation only to find that his account with God was all loss and no profit. Not wishing to go into eternal bankruptcy, he reverses his action, and henceforth lays up treasures in heaven. That squares the account, or rather changes it from all loss and no profit to all profit and no loss, for the account balanced reads, "All things are yours." It is in this manner that the business man may see at length that the great business of life has reference to eternity.

The lawyer may have a like experience. He has pleaded case after case, only at last to be himself under indictment, about to be called into judgment, and he looks for some one to manage his case before "the Judge of all the earth." More impressive and instructive and helpful than all his law books here is the Book of books wherein he reads from the divine John, "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." To this advocate he opens his heart, and soon with the consciousness of a glorious acquittal, he rests his case. No legal technicalities and quibbles can hold him longer under trial, for the successful plea in his behalf was made nineteen centuries ago on

Fishing Experiences

Calvary, when the advocate with the sanction of heaven and amid the volcanic plaudits of the earth closed his eloquent defense with the triumphant, "It is finished." Thus the barrister in the study of human law may be brought face to face with the divine law, before which he stands condemned, except as he is cleared by him whose defense was the pouring out of his very life with an eloquence so pathetic as to touch and overpower the heart of the Almighty himself.

How is it with the physician? He treats with calm equanimity the bodily ills of patient after patient, until some frightened soul says to him by looks if not in words, "It is not the pain, doctor, but it is the darkness; cannot you save me from the blackness of despair, cannot you illumine the future?" Such an appeal, though mute, to an ungodly practitioner must cut to the quick, as he recognizes that his dying patient is but reechoing the Scriptural proverb, "Physician, heal thyself." Had *he* been in the light, he might have led a wandering spirit out of the gloom. When Macbeth asked, "How does your patient, doctor?" the answer was, "Not so sick, my lord, as she is troubled with thick-coming fancies." Shakespeare knew that there was in the guilty Lady Macbeth "a mind diseased," that is, that there was upon her soul the stain of a great sin, which did "keep her from her rest," and which made her walk in her sleep with tormented spirit. Doubtless

Biblical Nature Studies

many a physician, in connection with his professional duties, has seen the need of a calling higher than his own, which can save the soul as well as heal the body, or which, as the great dramatist says, can "pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow."

Thus in every sphere the temporal can be made to lead to the eternal. The earthly is one of the most powerful instruments which Omnipotence uses. Not infrequently he reaches us through the senses. Such is human nature, and Diogenes understood it pretty well, when on one occasion in the long ago he went groping through the streets at noonday with lantern in hand, in search of *men*. True men were scarce in those days, and nothing could have impressed this so vividly upon the mind, as for that old philosopher to go peering through Athens with a lantern in broad daylight. That was a picture which struck the senses, and so it has been remembered for over two thousand years. The minister has to be a kind of Diogenes. People sometimes say, What is the use of the preacher, since he only tells his hearers to do what they ought to do without the telling? Nevertheless, in the words of Paul, it is "God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe."

To have a clergyman go round among parishioners with the lamp and light of God's Word in hand does set them to thinking, as they would not otherwise do. They cannot help being im-

Fishing Experiences

pressed when they see a ministerial Diogenes with the gospel lantern going here and there seeking men. That stirs their souls, as, for instance, the appeal through the glory of the heavens does not. The one, "holding forth the word of life" as "a lamp shining in a dark place," is right among them and so real; the other, the starry firmament, is far off, and so vague and powerless. It is all because, constituted as we are, the earthly has more power over us than the heavenly, or at least the heavenly is reached through the earthly. Peter went a fishing, and became a fisher of men. Through the material he was led to the immaterial. Happy are we, if we allow ourselves to be directed through nature up to nature's God, through the human up to the divine.

A second fishing experience of Peter is related by Matthew. It was the custom of the Jews who had reached the age of twenty to pay annually toward the support of temple worship at Jerusalem. This sacred tribute being asked of Christ through Peter, and neither of them having anything to give, the disciple was told to cast a hook into the water, and the fish caught would have within it the requisite amount of money, and it did have. Christianity needs men of wealth, fishes, if you please, with gold in their mouths. Money is needed not for the temple in Jerusalem as of old, but for temples over all the world. From China and Japan and India, and even from destitute places in our

Biblical Nature Studies

own country, the cry is for help, the means at command being too limited to carry on as could be wished the grand work of Christian evangelization. There is not enough in the treasury of the Church to meet all the demands for assistance. There are noble persons, whose riches are sent out in streams of blessing to mankind. There is needed the catching of more fish with money, for coin can be turned to a better use than to lie idle in the great stomach of selfishness, where alone it becomes, as the modern phrase is, "tainted." The fish is no better off for the gold within it, neither is man with all his ample means compassed in self. We want for Christ men of wealth, whether wealth of money or of mind. Every immortal creature, according to the great Teacher, is worth more than the whole world. All are of priceless value, but all are not equally capable of being brought into the kingdom.

Some are too wary to be taken in a net, to be drawn in with the multitude. They must be angled, caught singly by a hook (for that was Peter's method), by a hook prudently thrown. There is a legitimate fishing with the drag-net, there is the enclosing of a great mass by a sweeping movement, but the final result of this is not always satisfactory. As of old we get good and bad. We, for instance, work up an excitement, we launch out with much of demonstration, we throw our net, we pull it in, and it is full, but too largely of eels, for it is not

Fishing Experiences

long before many of the slippery things have squirmed out. Those caught singly, one by one, are apt to turn out better, and therefore we need more of skill with individuals, more of scientific fishing. There is science even in fishing, which cannot be done successfully by bunglers. Said Isaac Walton as long ago as 1653 in "The Complete Angler," "Move your rod softly as a snail moves to that chub you intend to catch; let your bait fall gently upon the water three or four inches before him, and he will infallibly take the bait." Then this writer gives a personal experience: "There lie upon the top of the water, in this very hole, twenty chubs. I'll catch only one, and that shall be the biggest of them all." He does angle so completely, that he immediately exclaims, "There he is, that very chub I showed you with the white spot on." This angling, this nice skill, this singling out the one we are after, this religious spotting of some particular person, is what we need in spiritual fishing. There should be a delicately-wise approach, such as characterizes "the complete angler."

Peter drew in a great multitude with the net, but when he caught the fish with money in it he cast the hook. While many can be swept into the kingdom, some can only be angled. We may not be able to address a great audience, to move a large congregation, but we can influence a friend, we can bring to bear upon some acquaintance the force of a consecrated

Biblical Nature Studies

personality. This can be made to tell mightily for the cause. There should be less of the hap-hazard effort and more of the definite aim. Of course, there is such a thing as "fisherman's luck," which Dr. Henry Van Dyke made the title of one of his delightful books. He enlarged upon the feature of chance, of uncertainty, of exciting adventure, in catching fish. There is an element of luck in the occupation, which, however, to a certain degree is also as we have seen an exact science.

To change the figure, and to use a Biblical phrase, there is not infrequently an effective drawing of the bow at a venture, and an Old Testament king was once thus brought down. Said Sir Walter Scott:

"O, many a shaft at random sent,
Finds mark the archer little meant."

Longfellow, too, pictures a random shot as having accomplished its purpose, when he wrote,

"I shot an arrow into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
* * * * *

"I breathed a song into the air,
It fell to earth, I know not where;
* * * * *

"Long, long afterward, in an oak
I found the arrow still unbroke;
And the song, from beginning to end,
I found again in the heart of a friend."

This is true often enough to encourage us in the quite casual remark. Nevertheless, while "an arrow into the air" does often hit the right

Fishing Experiences

spot, generally it is better to aim at a mark. Whether in shooting or in fishing or in doing religious work, it is well ordinarily to individualize more than we do.

A third time Peter went a fishing. It was in the interval of uncertainty between the resurrection and the ascension. Christ had died and risen again, appearing from time to time to his confused disciples. They hardly knew what to do, for they could no longer follow the Master personally as they had done, while all were sustained from a common purse. What now were they to do? That was the troubling question. At length Peter settled it so far as he was concerned by saying, "I go a fishing;" that is, he would take up his old occupation till he got more light, he would proceed with present duty and await further developments. Six others fell in with his plan, as they decided to go along. All night they toiled upon the lake, but in vain, till the morning came, when at the word of the unrecognized Lord on the shore the net was cast once more, quickly to be filled with the finny tribe, and soon Peter was at the Master's side, and before the interview closed, his faith was again made strong. In a time of doubt and darkness, he went a fishing, and found Christ anew.

We all, probably, at particular times come into a state of more or less uncertainty. We are in the dark. What shall we do? Just what Peter did; in all his confusion he felt that one thing

Biblical Nature Studies

was right, and that was to go to work, and at it he went in his old way. In a similar condition, we should give ourselves to activity, prosaically if need be, from a hard sense of duty if necessary, doing with a grim determination the best we can, acting up to the light we have. We are to hold ourselves steadily to this, to the unwavering performance of at least the minor and even of the major activities. By pursuing undeviatingly such a course of conduct, there will come to us sooner or later a revelation of the Lord, of whom we may have temporarily lost the vision. Whatever else may be uncertain, whatever may be our bewilderment in certain respects, it is right to fish for souls, to seek to help others.

We are to stand to our posts, we are to do heroic service, even in the midst of darkness. We ought to have more of the spirit shown by the brave Spartan at Thermopylæ. When he was reminded that the arrows of the Persians falling round him were so numerous as positively to obscure the sun, his reply was that he preferred to fight in the shade. His sentiment was,

Let the arrows come in their darkening flight,
They make a fine shade in which to fight.

When there is such resoluteness, such grit and grace, in facing ordeals, when we act well our part, however perfunctorily sometimes, however machine-like for the time being, when the Lord sees us toiling faithfully, he will "come to us,"

Fishing Experiences

and with his blessing on our efforts be they ever so material, the spiritual will certainly be added. The way out of religious perplexity and depression, and a general unsatisfactoriness of experience, is to set about doing something. By work faith in us is strengthened.

Nor are we to be discouraged by long toiling, for the dawn with better things is at hand. "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy cometh in the morning." With this assurance we are to toil on all through life even, all night, and when the morning of eternity breaks, Jesus will stand on the shore as he did with Peter, only it will be on the "shining shore," and our works shall follow us, our gospel net shall be drawn ashore after us, full of souls saved through our instrumentality. The more there are to come to us at last with grateful expression for the ways we have served them, and especially for transcendent service rendered in life's crucial periods, the more will be the flashing jewels with which our crowns of rejoicing will be set.

IX

THE WHITE MOUNTAINS

IX

THE WHITE MOUNTAINS

NEXT to the Catskills of my youth, what Starr King christened the White Hills have most frequently lured me, commanding my rapt attention and my highest admiration. It was the mountains of which Ruskin said, "these great cathedrals of the earth, with their gates of rock, pavements of cloud, choirs of stream and stone, altars of snow, and vaults of purple, traversed by the continual stars." The same author well notes how insignificant blades of grass contribute to the glory of the everlasting hills. Read his eloquent apostrophe to what he terms mere strips of "fluted green," and you can echo his language: "Look toward the higher hills, where the waves of everlasting green roll silently into their long inlets among the shadows of the pines; and we may, perhaps, at last know the meaning of those quiet words of the 147th Psalm, He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains."

In entering upon particulars, we shall have to confine ourselves, quoting from Deuteronomy, to "the chief things of the ancient mountains." The first important point in passing up the

Biblical Nature Studies

famous Franconia Notch is the Flume. This is a remarkable natural fissure, solid rock apparently having once been rent in twain by an earthquake or other shock, while through the opening thus made a stream dashes with a sense of liberty. For several hundred feet you ascend the gorge, stepping from stone to stone, or following a plank walk, or crossing romantic bridges, until in the narrowing defile, with the water roaring beneath your feet, and the rocks rising straight up on your right and on your left, and trees hanging threateningly over you, you almost fear for your life, lest by some slight jar things might be set to tumbling about your head.

Especially was there this sense of insecurity, when a few years ago between the walls at the narrowest place hung a huge boulder that weighed tons. It seemed to be held by the smallest contact possible with the crags on either side. Would not a push of the hand start it swinging, and perhaps spring it from its sockets? Naturally visitors felt somewhat timorous on passing beneath it, though sometimes with a kind of daring they would stoop to take a drink of water directly under the vast suspended mass. It doubtless had been lodged there for geologic ages, they would argue, while they felt it would continue there for countless millenniums yet. Starr King spoke of it in his day after this fashion, "as unpleasant to look at, if the nerves are irresolute, as the sword of

The White Mountains

Damocles, and yet held by a grasp out of which it will not slip for centuries.”

But he was mistaken. The sword of Damocles, suspended by a single hair, did fall; and the colossal stone did one day go crashing to the bottom of the chasm. On the 19th of June, 1883, there was a terrific thunder storm, and more deafening than the roar of heaven's artillery was an awful, deep rumbling which lasted for forty minutes, and which was heard at Bethlehem seventeen miles away. What had happened? A tremendous landslide had occurred, and the boulder was carried down like the merest pebble. We get here a lively and impressive illustration of the divine omnipotence. In the presence of the terrible forces of the mountains, we feel very sensibly the almightiness of the Creator. With such exhibitions of power, human helplessness becomes all too evident. Under such circumstances, one must be moved to stand and reverently worship.

Farther up the Franconia Notch is another wonder. A mountain breaks into human semblance, giving us the renowned Profile, or the Old Man of the Mountain. Ascend to that craggy height springing into the air 1200 feet above the valley, which is itself at a considerable elevation above the sea level, get a near view, and there are only chaotic rocks, without form and void. But when you are sufficiently removed, there is a strong and majestic

Biblical Nature Studies

and benignant face, and the poet's lines are verified,

“ 'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,
And robes the mountain in its azure hue,”

and it equally brings out in this case the lineaments of a man. When you get just the right standpoint, there appears that human visage, with its far-off look to the southeast.

There is the noble forehead, the perfect nose, and there are “the vast lips, which,” says Hawthorne in his classic Tale, “if they could have spoken, would have rolled their thunder accents from one end of the valley to the other,” that valley of which Whittier has said,

“ Watched over by the solemn-browed
And awful face of stone.”

The flight of time would seem as nothing to that serene countenance with its unchanging expression of repose.

The Profile Lake immediately below has been called the Old Man's washbowl, and again, with a finer thought, his mirror, but he remains unmoved at our fancies, and answers not a word, though the companion Echo Lake near by would seem to give an opportunity for a returning voice. He however makes no response. He just continues to beam pleasantly upon us in our infantile littleness. We stand and gaze at him with a certain awe, and we feel the subtle influence of those benign features whose peacefulness has not been disturbed for centuries.

The White Mountains

Hawthorne's romance of "The Great Stone Face" represents a boy Ernest as growing up in daily sight of the expressive face, and as being unconsciously educated by it into nobility of character. The lad was told by his mother of an Indian legend, that there would come some day to the valley a great and good man with a face like that sculptured by the hand of God on the brow of the mountain, and he began at once watching and waiting, and longing for the fulfillment of the mysterious prophecy. In his boyhood there returned to the valley one who had been a native of it, but who had gone away and had become immensely rich, and who in retiring from business selected the place of his happy childhood. On the site of the old farm-house he erected a marble palace, and furnished it in princely style. The popular impression at first was that the predicted coming one had appeared in this Gathergold, and a resemblance was imagined between his features and those chiseled in stone. But when his penuriousness was seen, and his general meanness of character, hopes were disappointed. Ernest from the outset had failed to see any likeness to the Great Stone Face in the "sordid visage" of the Midas at whose touch everything had turned to gold.

When he became a young man, another native of the valley came back to end his days there, and he was a celebrated general. Again were there great expectations, and the features of

Biblical Nature Studies

the Profile were eagerly compared with those of the distinguished commander. For a while resemblances were traced, but a closer inspection revealed a certain lack in the man of war. There was not the tenderness, the mildness, that appeared in the Great Stone Face, which was as the face of an angel "sitting among the hills," says the romancer, "and enrobing himself in a cloud-vesture of gold and purple." Ernest had reached middle age. when hope was again stirred, as an eminent statesman came back to the place of his nativity, having but recently been nominated to the Presidency. There was a triumphal procession of old neighbors and friends to give him a welcome, and banners were carried with his portrait smiling to another of the Stone Face, and according to the artist at least there was a striking resemblance between the two. Shouts went up for him who immediately became known as Old Stony Phiz, and the name of itself caught voters by the score. Once more was there disappointment, as time revealed an absence of high purpose in the honored guest, and selfish ambition was set aside as failing to meet the ideal so grandly imaged in stone.

Eventually Ernest became an old man, whose life had been one of quiet ministry to his fellows, and whose ripening of character was beautiful to behold, when another native of the valley appeared upon the scene in an illustrious poet. He sought out Ernest himself, who had

The White Mountains

become known far and wide as a kind of sage because of noble thoughts, which seemed to drop naturally from his lips as the fruit of real heart experiences. The poet found him alternately reading a book of the visitor's poems, and then gazing earnestly up at the physiognomy of rock. Upon his learning that the stranger was the writer of what he was reading, again were his anticipations unrealized, especially on hearing the poet's own confession that divine as his thoughts had been, his life had been very human.

And now came an astonishing disclosure. About sunset the aged inhabitant of the valley, as was his custom, gathered his neighbors about him, and spoke to them words of life out of a rich experience, and the poet himself sat and listened with entranced attention to the prophet of "mild, sweet, thoughtful countenance, with the glory of white hair diffused about it," while, says Hawthorne, "at a distance, but distinctly to be seen, high up in the golden light of the setting sun, appeared the Great Stone Face, with hoary mists around it, like the white hairs around the brow of Ernest," and the poet with "irresistible impulse" exclaimed, "Behold! behold! Ernest is himself the likeness of the Great Stone Face!" And it was even so. Not the wealthy merchant, nor the great military leader, nor the ambitious politician, nor even the author of world-wide fame, but the person of character was the one

Biblical Nature Studies

who was imaged in the grand Profile on the mountain side. He who daily dreamed of the sublime ideal in stone, and who sought for its realization in human character, himself became like that which engrossed his mind and heart. Let the fulfillment of prophecy be seen in the Christ who has already come, let the matchless face of the Son of man and Son of God be that upon which we gaze with adoration and aspiration, let him whose image appears in the Rock of Ages and in the everlasting hills be continually before our eyes, and we have a grander ideal than that of the Great Stone Face, and the character resulting will be correspondingly more noble.

We next pass round to take in the majestic Presidential range. These on an October day, when perhaps their tops are covered with snow and the air is translucent, are seen to be indeed in their crystal clearness the White Hills. The highest of these we once and again have climbed. We ascended on our first trip there by the carriage road, and after four miles of steady ascent we were above the timber line. But we had four miles more to go, we were only half way up, and how we were thrilled by the unique experience! We looked down into the valley below, and the dark shadows lying along it gave us a creeping sensation, as if we were peering down into Dante's Inferno. We struck into a cloud with the wind blowing a gale, and the mists came fairly boiling up out of gulfs and

The White Mountains

ravines which seemed bottomless pits. Then we were hit by a snow-squall, in July though it was, and we seemed to be in the wildest winter weather with drifting snows and fogs preventing vision farther than a few feet. We were not surprised to learn that ladies sometimes have to be held to be kept from being blown from the platform in front of the hotel then on the summit, while strong men occasionally have been hurled to the ground by a blast of the Almighty. We can imagine what an electric storm would be at such an altitude, with the lightning striking the bare rocks on every side, and with deep thunderings reverberating in awful sublimity from peak to peak.

We shuddered on seeing the pile of stones on the spot where Lizzie Bourne perished, having almost and yet not quite reached the top, as she lay down to die in a tempest of the night. We recalled the other tragedies of those who in some storm lost their trail, their discovered bones afterward telling of their mournful fate, while now and then one has wandered away never yet to be found. Amid the dense fog and especially the terrific play of the elements at a height where there is nothing to break their force, we feel the power of the Creator in whose sight the vast mountains are only as dust in the balance. Even in clear and calm weather we have a sense of being the merest pigmies on earth, when slowly we ascend Mount Washington. We wind round close by Madison and

Biblical Nature Studies

Adams and Clay and Jefferson, and we see them as it were sinking beneath our feet, and when we reach the highest crest we are bewildered by the multitude of Haystacks, to use the figure of the countryman, who said that New Hampshire contained so much land, it had to be stacked.

In another aspect the surrounding country seems to be tossed into multitudinous billows, while if we are favored with cloud effects far below, there is for all the world the appearance of white caps on an angry and boundless ocean, and we swing our hat in the brisk wind that is blowing, while we exclaim as Byron did of a European mountain,

“Mont Blanc is the monarch of mountains;
They crowned him long ago
On a throne of rocks, in a robe of clouds,
With a diadem of snow.”

We catch the enthusiasm of these lines, and we recognize that the great and majestic God who made all is worthy of the most devout adoration. Particularly do we feel this, when we consider how comparatively insignificant even the great mountains are as related to the whole round earth. “The thickness of a sheet of writing paper on an artificial sphere a foot in diameter,” we are authoritatively assured, “represents the eminence of the mountain chains. They are no more than the cracks in the varnish of such a ball.” Surely we ought to bow down and worship, we ought to kneel

The White Mountains

before the Lord our Maker, and the Creator of the universe.

In our survey, we must not omit the superb Crawford Notch. We see a silvery stream dashing along through the length of the valley, and we recall Tennyson's song of the brook,

“For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.”

We ascend Mount Willard at the head of the Notch, and from a precipitous edge we command a most pleasing view of forest-clad Willey on one side and of towering Webster on the other, and the whole immense gorge lies at our feet. Creeping to the brink of the shelving mountain, and looking straight down, and listening to the sounds that rise to our ears, we can say with Bryant,

“It is a fearful thing
To stand upon the beetling verge, and see
Where storm and lightning, from that huge gray wall,
Have tumbled down vast blocks, and at the base
Dashed them in fragments; and to lay thine ear
Over the dizzy depth, and hear the sound
Of winds, that struggle with the woods below,
Come up like ocean murmurs.”

Still standing there, we are reminded of the Willey catastrophe that brought disaster to the family of that name far below us in the center of the Notch. This was in 1826. In front of the humble inn was a green stretch of meadow, extending to Mount Webster of frowning brow. Back of the dwelling rose

Biblical Nature Studies

threateningly Mount Willey, but being verdure-clad it did not seem specially fraught with danger. To be sure, a thunder-bolt or a suddenly rising stream would sometimes loosen a huge boulder on Webster, and with a deafening roar it would go crashing to the bottom, leaving a trail of light along the path it quickly traversed. But the Willey family were not prepared to see, after a dark and heavy August storm, the mountain itself back of them begin to move in their direction. Nevertheless, that evidently was what they did see in the horror of great darkness which must have been theirs. They rushed from the house only to be caught by the avalanche, which covered the meadow at places to a depth of thirty feet, and which buried three of the household so deep that they were never found.

Had they remained in the cottage, they would have been spared, for just above it a rocky ledge divided the landslide, and the little structure that had been their home was saved. Over the remains that were recovered, very properly did the preacher at the funeral speak from the text which says of God that he weighs "the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance." Very significantly was the family Bible lying open on the table in the Willey house at the eighteenth Psalm, containing such impressive sentences as these,

"The Lord also thundered in the heavens,"

"And the foundations of the world were laid bare."

The White Mountains

The historic disaster suggests that the natural world has not only a benign but also a threatening aspect. Of the author of nature Paul bids us behold both his goodness and his severity. With such tragedies, there would seem to be no inherent improbability against the judgment to come pictured in the Revelation, when many shall cry to the rocks and the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. That catastrophe in a New England mountain-pass shows what does sometimes occur, and what therefore may occur again at the final consummation of history. But the manifestly calm reading of the Holy Scripture in that crisis indicates a trust, which can rise superior to all calamities. We can be like Tennyson, who believed in God and immortality and in an overruling providence, to quote his well-known lines,

“‘Tho’ Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shrieked against his creed.”

There can be a quiet contemplation of the worst that may be coming, while yet there is retained a serene faith in him whom the Bible reveals.

X

**THE MOUNTAINS ROUND ABOUT
JERUSALEM**

X

THE MOUNTAINS ROUND ABOUT JERUSALEM

DR. HENRY VAN DYKE, Princeton Professor, distinguished author, and American Minister to the Netherlands, when he went to Southern California, caught inspiration from the Sierra Madre range as seen from Pasadena. Under the spell of its heights he wrote these lines:

“O Mother Mountains! billowing far to the snow-lands,
Robed in aerial amethyst, silver, and blue,
Why do ye look so proudly down on the lowlands?
What have their gardens and groves to do with you?

* * * * *

“O Mother Mountains, Madre Sierra, I love you!
Rightly you reign o’er the vale that your bounty fills,—
Kissed by the sun, or with big, bright stars above you,—
I murmur your holy name, and lift up mine eyes to the
hills.”

The writer evidently had in mind what the Psalmist wrote:

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains:
From whence shall my help come?
My help cometh from Jehovah,
Which made heaven and earth.”

The sight of the mountains, the implication is, has an inspiring effect. We are reminded of the thrill of rapture felt by the ten thousand Greeks, when the sea first burst upon their view.

Biblical Nature Studies

You remember the story as related by Xenophon in his immortal *Anabasis*. The Greeks in their expedition to the far east met with reverse after reverse, until they had to abandon their project of a Persian conquest.

The long march home was conducted amid disasters that almost overwhelmed the band of heroes, who, however, struggled on till at length the foremost ranks from a rise of ground saw in the distance the glimmering waters of the Euxine. They sent up a shout of joy at the longed-for sight, and others, hurrying forward to ascertain the cause of the excitement, helped to swell the mighty volume of glad cheering. The commander-in-chief, spurring his horse toward the front, caught the exultant cry, "The sea! the sea!" That spoke of a speedy end to their toilsome march. The successful retreat of the famous ten thousand from the plains of Babylon was to be accomplished, to be the wonder of every century since. The sight of the sea meant deliverance from extremest peril, and a safe return home.

Israel was portrayed as experiencing a similar relief and transformation, when, on lifting up the eyes, the mountains came into view. It has been suggested that the Psalm, from which our quotation has been made, may have been chanted by the pilgrims returning from the exile in Babylon. The land of the captivity was a level country, so level as to have been monotonous to the Median princess, whom Neb-

Mountains Round About Jerusalem

uchadnezzar married and brought from her mountainous home to the prosaic plain. That is why the oriental monarch built the celebrated Hanging Gardens, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was to gratify an expressed desire of his young wife to see a mountain again. Accordingly for her the artificial hill was constructed, rising picturesquely in successive terraces above the city walls *like* a garden, like a suspended paradise, which it was. The Jews also tired of the dreary sameness of Babylon, resembling our great stretches of prairie. They had come from what is expressly called a "hill country," and when by decree of Cyrus they were permitted to return to their native land, they eagerly climbed higher and higher till they were once more among the "everlasting hills," which they so loved, as William Tell, according to Schiller, loved the "crags and peaks" of Switzerland. Drawing near their destination after a wearisome pilgrimage, they might well have broken out into the triumphant strain, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains."

"Sacred Mountains" indeed were those of the Holy Land, and the historian, Headley, devoted an entire book to a description of what has transpired on their peaks. Mount Olympus was fabled to be the abode of the Grecian gods, but Mt. Carmel was actually the scene of the manifestation of the fiery presence of the eternal and only living God. The sculptor of

Biblical Nature Studies

Alexander the Great thought that Mount Athos in Thrace, because of its natural conformation, could quite easily be transformed by chisel and hammer into a statue of the great general, which, says Plutarch, "in its left hand should hold a city of ten thousand inhabitants, and out of its right should pour a copious river into the sea." That, had the proposal been acted upon, would have been a splendid transformation, but it would not have equalled the transfiguration, which really did take place on another mount three centuries later, when, says an evangelist, "Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart," where he was "transfigured before them," while "his face did shine as the sun, and his garment became white as the light," glistening as the snow of Hermon, on which they were. The associations make the mountains of Israel dearer and grander than those of any other country, giving them a religious significance. Looming heights anywhere are suggestive of the majesty and glory of God. All of us have been impressed with the stately Biblical sentiment, "The strength of the hills is his," and with the sublime utterance of Isaiah, "He weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance." The mountainous always and everywhere awes the human spirit, but more especially are we moved by the "mountains round about Jerusalem," which we are to consider,

Mountains Round About Jerusalem

glancing at simply three heights, that are famous as the seven hills whereon Rome was built.

The first is Zion, which, however, is by no means a Mont Blanc. It cannot compare in impressiveness with this as seen from the lovely valley of Chamonix. It has no Alpine grandeur. It is only about 2500 feet above the level of the Mediterranean, and most of us have stood on greater elevations than that in the Catskills, and in the White Mountains, where indeed summer hotels have been found at an altitude of 3,000 and even 6,000 feet. Nevertheless the Psalmist could say,

“Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth,
Is Mount Zion.”

And its moral elevation is grand, for out of it has come the law, and out of Jerusalem the word of God. There for over 1,000 years the kings and princes of Israel held the sceptre of power. There was founded a theocratic kingdom, out of which with germinant force sprang Christianity. There was inaugurated a worship destined to become universal. There, on one of its spurs, on Mt. Moriah, where the mosque of Omar now stands, was erected the temple, a perpetual call to mankind to bow down before the Lord, the Maker of all. The sanctuary was the most conspicuous object on the “holy hill of Zion,” on its Moriah peak.

We have here, then, a summons to recognize

Biblical Nature Studies

God, to meet for his worship. Zion, the holy temple, is not to be neglected. As the tribes of old went up to Jerusalem, we have our Zions to-day in the various churches where we should gather. We need time and again to climb to the mountain top of devotion and praise. We live too much in the plains. All the week we are in the valley, amid temptation and trial and abounding worldliness, and we need the Sabbath to lift us to higher altitudes. President-Emeritus Eliot of Harvard, who sets a notably good example in this respect, has well said: "People of to-day should go to church regularly; for, if men allow themselves to go without attending to the noblest things, they must expect to lose themselves in the confused stress and strain of everyday affairs." We need to come to a decided stop every seventh day, and get out of the surging mass of sinning, chafing humanity, and we need to ascend the slopes of Zion, singing as we go,

"I was glad when they said unto me,
Let us go unto the house of the Lord."

Groveling in the dust, ground down by business, crushed by trouble, overborne by the power of evil, we need to lift our eyes unto the mountains whence cometh our help, unto Mount Zion, unto the repose of worship. Like a peaceful mountain, the appointed day of rest properly observed rises out of the surrounding chaos, calling our thoughts from the earthly to

Mountains Round About Jerusalem

the heavenly. We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom of some is, says an apostle, as the habit of many is, we must say. There seems to be an increasing number of non-churchgoers even among professed believers, who in this respect do not follow in the footsteps of the Master, concerning whom it is recorded, "As his custom was, he entered into the synagogue on the sabbath day." That is, he had the habit of worship, and we should have, not neglecting God's house, which has in it so much of helpfulness, which lifts us from the low vale to the lofty mount.

The quiet hour at intervals is invaluable. It throws about us defensive influences, fortifying us against coming attacks of sin and sorrow. Zion anciently was an impregnable fortress. It was one of the last points to succumb in the conquest of Canaan by Joshua. It was the very last to surrender to Titus, 70 A.D., when Jerusalem was trodden down of the Gentiles, as commemorated in the Arch of Titus still standing near the historic Roman Forum in the city on the Tiber. The mount overthrown with such difficulty was the Gibraltar of Palestine. The Church is such a stronghold. It is a Mount Zion, a Gibraltar, for the tempted and tried. We are to lift up our eyes unto this mountain. Regular worshippers in the sanctuary receive a special blessing, they have as others do not the Lord for their helper.

Olivet is another sacred mountain which has

Biblical Nature Studies

for us a helpful suggestion. On its western slope was Gethsemane, which we once visited with tender hearts. From its top, whence also we looked and indulged in the reminiscent, there was the weeping of the Lord over Jerusalem. Over on its opposite slope was the village of Bethany, the home of Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus, where we lovingly lingered. It was the scene of the Triumphal Entry, when the people had to shout, or the very stones would have cried out, as the eloquence of Brutus made

“The stones of Rome to rise in mutiny.”

But the peculiar renown of Olivet arises from its marking the place of the Ascension. Perhaps not from the point where the emperor Constantine and his aged mother built their memorial church, but somewhere from its sides or summits the risen Lord ascended on high, and Olivet fades away in the cloud which received him out of sight. The top of this holy mount is thus, so to speak, lost in the clouds. It penetrates the sky. Because of this glorious fact each of us should say with the Psalmist, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains,” unto Mount Olivet, whence cometh our help, for the promise is, “this Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven.” The certainty of the Lord’s resurrection and ascension is something upon which we should fix our eyes, as upon a massive moun-

Mountains Round About Jerusalem

tain filling all the vision; and the certainty of his coming again, of the repetition of the cloudy splendor of Olivet, when he shall come on the clouds of heaven with all the holy angels,—this should lead us to make sure of being among those, who, says the apostle, are “looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

In other words, we should see to it that we have more of the upward look, of the hope reaching like an anchor sure and steadfast within the veil. Our citizenship should increasingly be in heaven. Even the *British Weekly* has said that “the future life” needs to enter more into religious thinking. Eternity does grip the conscience as nothing else does. We should live more in the realm of the world to come; not to the extent of neglecting earthly duties, for that would be standing and gazing idly up into the sky like the disciples of old, who were gently rebuked therefor. But we should look long enough and often enough through the gates ajar between which loved ones sweep, long enough and often enough in the direction whither Christ disappeared in glory, to get a vivid sense of the reality of the celestial world. We need to ascend the mount touched by the cloud that receives the departing out of sight. From this exalted communion with the unseen, we shall descend better equipped to fight life’s battle.

It was the distinguished Fabius who was

Biblical Nature Studies

noted for "always keeping upon the hills." For this he was ridiculed by his impatient followers, the Romans, who inquired contemptuously, "whether it were not his meaning, by thus leading them from mountain to mountain, to carry them at last (having no hopes on earth) up into heaven, or to hide them in the clouds from Hannibal's army." But the great African general, the hero of old Carthage, saw the wisdom of Fabius. Subsequently meeting with defeat from him, he said, "Did not I tell you, that this cloud which always hovered upon the mountains at some time or other would come down with a storm upon us?" It was even so. That cloud contained thunder and lightning, contained bolts of destruction which nothing could resist.

We need to dwell much, or at least more than we do in these busy times, on the heights of Olivet, in thoughts of heaven, in meditations upon the unseen. It is well occasionally to *get* up "among the clouds," though this may excite the ridicule of the prosaic, of those who have no ideals, of those who pride themselves on keeping to terra firma. Aristophanes, a literary critic of the golden age of Greece, represented Socrates as caught up to the clouds in a basket, and there he had the philosopher swinging in mid air. It was as if his views were altogether too exalted, too utterly superfine, for earth, too far beyond and above the reach of ordinary mortals, and the comedian

Mountains Round About Jerusalem

thus tried to laugh him out of court. But we to-day see that from the lofty, and, if you please, cloudy and hazy altitude to which he was lifted in contempt, there came the very best and most forceful teachings of antiquity for the elevation of humanity.

We may be sneered at for our "other-worldliness," for living among the clouds with our impracticable notions of accomplishing anything by communing with the divine, but from those very clouds will come an electrical energy, a spiritual power, which will sweep with the strength of the thunder storm over the valley below, to which we descend for meeting its stern realities. Christ himself often went up into the mountain to pray, and especially on the eve of some trying ordeal. Cloud-capped Olivet is a good preparation for the conflict in the vale. We are thereby made sons of thunder, vital personalities fairly vibrant with electricity and well-nigh resistless.

Once more, Calvary is needed to complete the view. This is not, strictly speaking, a mountain at all. The old paintings sometimes picture it as a rugged height, but this does not correspond to the fact. It is not so much as called a hill by the evangelists, but the "place of a skull," its name, in the opinion of many, being derived from its form, from its being a rounded, skull-shaped mound. In this view of the matter, it was little more than a hillock.

Helena, the mother of Constantine, in her

Biblical Nature Studies

pilgrimage to the holy land at the age of eighty in the year 326, could scarcely find it; but when she did discover what she believed was the site, well did her converted son, the emperor, displace the temple of Venus which had been erected there as an insult from heathenism,—very properly did he demolish this, and build in its stead the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. This stood for three hundred years, and though burned by the Persians in the seventh century, and though its successor was destroyed by the Mohammedans in the tenth, there has been a restoration again and again, the last time in the nineteenth century, and this was the edifice we entered, with feelings like those of the Crusaders when they sought to rescue the place from infidels during conflicts lasting for two centuries.

This spot of hallowed memory, could it be certainly identified, should be, if possible, preserved and cherished, for there Christ was crucified, there he was buried in a rocky tomb, there he died for human sin, there he made the great sacrifice which was to be once for all, which was forever to end the shedding of blood on smoking altars. But after all no such device as a church is needed to indicate the locality of Calvary. The great sacrificial truth, without requiring any outward symbol, speaks for itself with a most impressive majesty.

We, however, would like to know the place of the Lord's burial, for which there is another

Mountains Round About Jerusalem

claimant, that is growing in favor among modern scholars. To be sure, the spot where the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is located has been generally accepted for sixteen centuries. It was the tomb here for which the Crusaders so long contended. But not till the early part of the fourth century did Helena make her identification. She did not make her investigation till nearly three hundred years after the event. Meanwhile Jerusalem had been razed to the ground. The destruction was so thorough that all local sites must have been obliterated. Moreover, the one chosen is apparently within the ancient walls of old Jerusalem, as excavations would seem to show, whereas we are expressly informed that Christ was crucified and buried without the gate.

Now just outside the present Damascus Gate, there is a grassy knoll, which singularly answers to the description of the "green hill far away, without a city wall." In the face of it are grottoes, which make cavernous eyes, that from the right position give it very much the appearance of a human skull, justifying the New Testament writers in their characterization of the place. Still further, the new Calvary is a rounded, skull-shaped hill, giving another reason for the name. At its base, too, is a lovely garden breathing with the perfume of flowers, and the rock-hewn tomb wherein no man had yet been laid, and wherein the Lord found his repose of three days, was in the gar-

Biblical Nature Studies

den of the Arimathean Joseph, and therefore in some such quiet spot as is here increasingly being commemorated. There is likewise a sepulchre excavated in the ledge of stone rising to form the plateau. So that all the conditions seem to be met in this Calvary, and with a tearful reverence we entered the tomb, which may have been that indicated by the angel in saying, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." One cannot very well stand unmoved within this sacred shrine, where he who died to save us all may have been entombed.

There is here no great elevation of ground, if we are looking for that, and yet Calvary is high. A quaint old writer has called it the highest peak in the world, and it is. Mount Washington, crowning New England scenery, is high, over 6,000 feet, but Calvary is higher. Mont Blanc, the pride of Europe, is more than 15,000 feet, but it is not, as Byron says mistakenly, "the monarch of mountains," for Calvary is that. Mount McKinley in Alaska exceeds 20,000 feet, and is the highest summit in North America, but there is a higher in Palestine. South America in the Andes range boasts of an altitude at one point, in Mount Huascarán, recently ascended by a daring woman, of about 24,000 feet, while the Himalayas in their loftiest peak, Mount Everest, rise to the prodigious height of 29,000 feet, nearly equivalent to five Mount Washingtons one above another, like the classic "Ossa piled on Pelion."

Mountains Round About Jerusalem

But all these fall short of Mount Calvary, upon which the eyes of the whole world can be fixed spiritually at one time. Like England's drum-beat which can be heard round the globe, *it can be seen* round the earth. There is no place where it is not visible to the eye of faith. All Christendom is looking unto Calvary. Pagan lands are turning their eyes more and more to the same holy mount, since in it is help for sinful, guilty mankind. The cross makes an appeal to the human heart altogether unique, and Mount Calvary contains the cross.

Going in 1907 from a stay of five months in California, we were eager to see on our line of railway a height, whose sheltered, shaded ravines are such, that a vast white cross of unmelted snow, 1500 feet by 500, appears with great distinctness on the sloping mountain. The sight in a book of scenery inspired Longfellow to write,

“There is a mountain in the distant West
That, sun-defying, in its deep ravines
Displays a cross of snow upon its side.”

Calvary is a mountain, whose most conspicuous characteristic is the cross of redemption, which it bears, so to speak, deeply imbedded in its rock-ribbed sides, and which is thrilling the hearts of humanity with hope and gladness. This, and not that yonder rising so superbly among the Rockies, is the true “Mountain of the Holy Cross.” Looking, therefore, unto

Biblical Nature Studies

Calvary's Mount, each of us can say with a sacred poet,

“Here I would for ever stay,
Weep and gaze my soul away;
Thou art heaven on earth to me,
Lovely, mournful Calvary!”

Zion, Olivet, Calvary, how they tower one above the other, constituting a very Presidential range like that of which New Hampshire people so proudly speak, or being, as the Bible says, veritable “mountains of God.” They give us three mighty ranges of truth, leading us out of the valley of perplexing care and chafing sin to the mount of reposeful worship, to the mount of uplook into the sky—of communion with the heavenly, and to the mount of peace through the blood of the cross. These are what Bunyan in his delightful imagery would call Delectable Mountains, and may we walk more and more in this Beulah Land of commanding heights, of inspiring truths, of Alpine altitudes with the cross dominating all.

“In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o’er the wrecks of time,
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.”

These are religious heights more sublime than the intellectual to which Henry Cabot Lodge, in the recent dedication of the Widener library building at Harvard, said we could rise through the medium of the noble books now so royally

Mountains Round About Jerusalem

housed at Cambridge. The Massachusetts senator is always most happy in his classical allusions, and he has a charm of literary expression all his own, and he is equally felicitous in his wide-range quotations, as he was on this University occasion when he recalled these lines that are also capable of a spiritual application:

“O, let me leave the plains behind,
And let me leave the vales below!
Into the highlands of the mind,
Into the mountains let me go.

“Here are the heights, crest beyond crest,
With Himalayan dews impearled;
And I will watch from Everest
The long heave of the surging world.”

XI

EAGLES AND STORKS

XI

EAGLES AND STORKS

HAVING been for some time in high mountain altitudes, we naturally proceed from this point of elevation to a flight into the air in a consideration of some of the denizens thereof. In making a necessary selection here, we take eagles and storks as being the most imperial fliers.

The eagle has been called the king of birds, as the lion has been named king of beasts. Two of the greatest nations of modern times have therefore made them national emblems. We talk of the British lion, and of the great American eagle. Indeed various countries have adopted the eagle; the illustrious Napoleon could find nothing more suitable for his beloved France. Even as far back as the Cæsars, the Roman eagles were the standards borne everywhere by the victorious legions. Jeremiah said, "swifter than the eagles," as he admired their rapid flight. Solomon was struck with the height to which they rise, "like an eagle that flieth toward heaven." Job referred to their power of vision, their eyes beholding the prey "afar off."

Striking characteristics these are, but storks

Biblical Nature Studies

are a close second, if they do not stand first, for majestic flight. From Africa, when the spring comes, they are said to fly without once alighting across the entire Mediterranean and over the whole of Europe far above the Alps to their northern nesting-places in Holland and Denmark and elsewhere. European travellers are always interested in them, and in their nests, built preferably on towers or ruined castles or lofty roofs. The stork is sacred to the city of Strasburg, from which no American should go without first seeing it, either domesticated in some enclosure or perched in statuesque fashion on some high chimney. As he sees it, he thinks of the long distance it has flown, and of its returning year after year to the same place, till it is recognized as an old friend. In Venice, it is the pigeons of St. Mark's, which are fed and loved, and even the stranger receives their friendly overtures in expectation of being given some dainty to eat. One of them actually alighted on my head, on my hat, when it was my privilege to see them in the Italian city which has adopted them as peculiarly her own. As they rise from the public square in graceful flight toward the top of the Campanile, and to the heights where they have their homes, you feel like exclaiming with the Psalmist, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! Then would I fly away and be at rest." But in Strasburg it was the storks which our guide felt that we must see before continuing

Eagles and Storks

our journey from that point. In their ability to fly so high and so far, they suggest to us a comparison with souls, of which we may say with Zechariah in a different connection, "The wind was in their wings; now they had wings like the wings of a stork." In other words, as spiritual beings we are peculiarly fitted for flight.

We are taught this no less by the eagle. No one appreciated better the royal bearing of this bird than Moses, who must have often seen it in the wilderness, and amid the crags and peaks so familiar to his sight. If one thing more than another constitutes it a king, or gives it queenly preeminence, that single distinguishing trait is indicated by this Old Testament writer when he says:

"As an eagle that stirreth up her nest,
That fluttereth over her young,
He spread abroad his wings, he took them,
He bare them on his pinions."

The mother bird drives her young from the nest, she wants them to learn to fly. Their wings would never gain strength without use. They must venture out. They dread to start, but they cannot always be fed; they must get their own living, and especially must know what an independent life is, and so they are thrust out to do for themselves. The parental treatment of them does seem hard at first. The nest is away up in some cliff, and the eaglets are pushed from the nursery in the lofty rock, and they go falling through the air.

Biblical Nature Studies

There they come from a height of hundreds of feet, down, down, down. They spread their tiny wings, and mount up a little. They fold their pinions unconsciously, and again they begin to descend toward the bottom of the chasm. They make another attempt to fly, and by vigorous beating of the atmosphere they manage to ascend somewhat. Before they are fully aware of it, they cease their motions (for they do not have the stroke yet), and they are falling once more. All the time they are nearing the hard rocks at the foot of the cliff, and can it be that the parent bird will let them have their life dashed out far below? By no means; she has watched their feeble efforts with keenest interest. She has sailed round and round just above them, hovering over them, ready for any emergency. When she sees they are quite exhausted, she swoops under them with broad, extended wings, catches them up thereon, till they are rested a little, and have gained some confidence. Then she flies from beneath them, and leaves them for a while to their own exertions. She keeps close above them, and at any indication of failing strength she darts under them to stay them up again. This is continued, till the eaglets are able to soar away into the blue vault to be lost to sight. It was well that their nest was stirred up, otherwise they would never have risen toward the sun. If they were never made to struggle in midair, they would never learn to fly.

Eagles and Storks

Strenuous effort has been shown to be true of the very bee as a preliminary to any accomplishment. There is an illustration of this by F. B. Meyer, not before me for the moment, but its substance is readily recalled. The sweet maker of honey in its embryotic state is enclosed in a cell over which is a capsule of wax. Like the chick through the egg-shell, it must work its way out by pushing and struggling. Its gauze-like wings, which are bound to its sides, are loosened in the very process of breaking through the confining membrane. The opposing capsule is a blessing in disguise. A bee-keeper tells of a moth gaining entrance to a hive and eating off the wax capsules, until the bees had the easy time of simply walking out of their cells, but they were wingless, and were stung to death by their fellows, and were thrust out as useless. They could unfold wings only by much striving for freedom.

Discipline answers the same purpose for souls. With wings thus developed they can triumph over every adverse influence. By battling with storms they can rise above the same, with divine assistance. God is the eagle, for in Exodus we read of him, "I bear you on eagles' wings." We are the eaglets whom he thrusts forth to our own endeavors, while yet he flutters over us, and gives us helpful lifts when needed.

We might apply this all to a family in various circumstances, and we would see how fitting

Biblical Nature Studies

the figure is. For instance, two young persons mate, leaving the old homestead. They marry, and start in the world for themselves. If they are thoughtful, they will have times of shrinking from entering upon wedlock. They have been so well provided for in the old home, they have been so happy there, that they almost tremble at the responsibilities of the new life they are contemplating. Shall they make the venture? Notwithstanding such musings, there is a mysterious power forcing them on and out of the former relations. And it is best that it should be so; it is not meant that we should always stay in the old nest. That would be against nature, and parents, much as they dislike to have children leave them, feel after all that it must be so. Therefore, after a certain period of nurture a day comes, when there is a stir at the homestead. There is bustle, and excitement. Preparations are made for a marriage. Every one moves with a quick step about the house. There is laughter, and there are tears.

Bureaus are ransacked, and trunks are packed. There are fitful embraces, and broken words. Friends arrive in rapid succession. The doorbell rings almost constantly. Rooms are crowded. A hush of expectancy is followed by a rustle of silk, and in the presence of the assembled guests vows of mutual love and fidelity are made. Congratulations are offered. Music floats through the rooms. A festive table

Eagles and Storks

is spread. Twenty miles distant a train comes speeding on. It is ten miles nearer. Hurried good-byes are spoken. A carriage rolls away, the guests depart, and when all has become quiet, the change that has occurred is keenly realized. The words, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder," are irrevocable. It was God's doing. It was he, who stirred up that nest, and sent out into the world the twain made one. They are to make a nest for themselves, and they ought to build high. God is hovering over them to assist them upwards. There would not be so many families going down, down, down, if like eaglets they would send up their cry for help, if there were an atmosphere of prayer in the household, if family worship were maintained, if religion entered more into the domestic relations.

That is what will give us the ideal home, like that pictured so fascinatingly by Robert Burns in that gem of Scottish literature, "The Cotter's Saturday Night:"

"The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
The big ha'-Bible, ance his father's pride:

* * * * *

"Then, kneeling down to heaven's eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays:
Hope springs 'exulting on triumphal wing,'
That thus they all shall meet in future days."

The poet well comments,

"From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad."

Biblical Nature Studies

For the avoiding of friction, for the quieting of the mind, for the composing of the heart, there is nothing like this seeking of help from above.

The parent bird responds and bears up her young on her wings, and that is what God is willing to do for every family. When he stirs up the old home nest, and sends forth a young couple, he watches their course with tender sympathy, and if he sees them sinking under the weight of the new responsibilities, he is more than ready to outspread beneath them his pinions, and to bear them "as on eagles' wings."

He would have them see the need of the spiritual. They may become too much absorbed in the temporal. They may come to glory in their worldly life, in the money they are making, in the constancy with which they meet their round of secular duties, in the good time they are having. To quote from Horace Bushnell's famous sermon on Feet and Wings, "It is as if eagles had fallen out of their element and descended to be cranes, pleased that the legs they stand upon have grown so tall and trim, and are able to wade in such deep water," whereas they might "soar as eagles do and burn their wings in the sun." Into that atmosphere with its clear light and tranquil blue, we are to "mount up." God has given us the facilities for rising. Our eyes must be unto the hills, whence cometh the blessing. Of ourselves we are helpless. As another has said,

Eagles and Storks

“Our souls can neither fly nor go
To reach eternal joys.”

That is true when we attempt the flight in our own strength, when we do not use the right instrumentalities, when our aspirations and endeavors are humanly presumptuous rather than divinely spiritual. There is such a thing as rising in our own self-sufficiency up to the very gates of heaven, only to be cast down therefrom. We should remember the truth pictured in the classical tale of Dædalus and Icarus, those first navigators of the air. They were imprisoned on an island, and all the vessels that plied the surrounding waters were closely watched to prevent their escape. The father saw no way to liberty except through the air, and accordingly he set about making wings for himself and his son. The boy gathered all the feathers he could find, and the parent with thread and wax put them together, giving them the shapely curvature of a bird's wings.

When the work was completed, and when the wings were adjusted, the artist found that he could rise and poise himself in midair. He was delighted, and when he had equipped his son, and after he had charged him to take no rash flights, they sailed away, over the plowman who stopped his work to look in wonder, and over the shepherd who leaning on his staff gazed at them in astonishment, as they cleaved the atmosphere like gods. The father arrived safely in Sicily, where he humbly worshipped in a tem-

Biblical Nature Studies

ple. The boy, growing over confident, rose with the self-made wings toward heaven itself, and the blazing sun melting the wax he began rapidly to fall from his great height, till he was engulfed in a sea, which henceforth bore his name, the Icarian Sea.

If we would avoid the tragic fate of Icarus, we must not rashly attempt to rise to heaven with the waxen wings of self-sufficiency, for these will fail us in the searching, scorching light of the Sun of righteousness, and we shall be thrust down from the very gates of pearl. It is only by the wings of faith and prayer, by the stork's wings wherein is the wind, wherein alone is spiritual soaring power, that we can surely rise to the height of heaven, and enter therein.

We have referred to the marital pairing of a couple, who next find a resting-place. They locate their nest, sometimes higher and sometimes lower. Then the nest has to be feathered; they want a comfortable home, and that is right. They make a success of life, and rent or build or buy a modern house. They have bright pictures on the wall, soft carpets or choice rugs on the floor. They have pretty ornaments, luxurious chairs, and all that heart could wish. They are proud of their neat, cozy place. They have a well-kept lawn, handsome shade trees, and abundant fruit. They set a bounteous table. Could anything be pleasanter than a family thus situated? They have their nest nicely feathered.

Eagles and Storks

But how often business reverses change all this! It is an exceptional household, which does not at some time in its history know what it is to be in cramped or at least reduced circumstances. Domestic expenses have to be cut down. The table has to do without the usual luxuries. The piano, the fine chamber set, and other rich furnishings it may be, have to be sold. One thing after another, to which the heart clings on account of the associations, has to be disposed of, and perhaps the house itself at last has to be given over to inexorable creditors.

How many a well-feathered nest has thus been stirred up by God, possibly not to so great an extent as this, and yet has been sadly ruffled in its interior arrangement. But the Lord does not afflict willingly; he does it for each family's profit. They may have built too low, not near enough heaven, and therefore Providence may have to go to the extreme of breaking up their home. He may cast them out upon the world almost if not quite penniless. They may have to start again, and at such a time he hovers very tenderly over them, and he would not have them despair. He wants them to rise to a new hope, to build higher. He is anxious to assist them in this, and though he has thrown them out as it were on nothingness, he is like the eagle which flutters affectionately over her brood, as, thrust from the nest, they struggle on the empty air, but are caught on parental

Biblical Nature Studies

wing just when they need assistance most. God does pecuniarily disturb many a home, he stirs up the feathered nest, but he is close by to bear the occupants on extended pinions to a higher point, where they can get more of the light from heaven. Every family, whose home nest he in any measure has stripped of its feathers, of its resources, should realize the divine purpose in it, and be sustained by the grace that is sufficient.

There is an opposite condition of things in which there is danger. The head of the house does *not* meet with adversity. On the contrary he is exceedingly prosperous. He is in the rush of business, amid its stress and strain. There are many annoyances and vexations, and he loses his equanimity of spirit. He becomes easily exasperated, until he is like "the fretful porcupine" both at home and in his commercial dealings with others. He does not maintain an even disposition, a Christlike frame of mind. What is the way of escape? It is to get in touch with the divine, it is to rise to the higher altitudes, not always like the king of birds, one may not aspire quite as high as that, but at least like a humbler denizen of the air. The eagle is a rare bird, *rara avis* in the aviary of the Catskills where my childhood was spent. But the hawk resembling it is often seen, sailing round and round in graceful circles at a considerable height, with wings that are not noisily flapped, that are rather held in steady

Eagles and Storks

poise, awakening the wonder of every boy, who can never cease admiring its aerial flight far above his head. John Burroughs, in speaking of its calmness and dignity when pursued by crows or kingbirds, writes as follows: "He seldom deigns to notice his noisy and furious antagonist, but deliberately wheels about in that aerial spiral, and mounts and mounts till his pursuers grow dizzy and return to earth again. It is quite original, this mode of getting rid of an unworthy opponent, rising to heights where the braggart is dazed and bewildered and loses his reckoning. I'm not sure but it is worthy of imitation." It certainly is. When one has become nervous and unduly sensitive, and suffers from exasperating hits and attacks, there is nothing like the calm of the upper air to restore a proper and most desirable equilibrium.

No home, to proceed to another point, is complete without children. They are the birdlings for which the nest is designed. How much a babe *is* like a bird, it opens its mouth for everything, and there everything has to go. Stand over a brood of young birds, and make a noise, and the only thing they think of is to have their mouths filled, and they stretch up their necks, and wait for some delicious morsel to drop. That is infants right over again, they imagine everything is for their mouths. As they grow older, they become still more interesting. They begin to chirp and twitter, and soon the nest

Biblical Nature Studies

is full of melody. A happy household is that which has small children. They bring cheer and comfort. They are indeed more or less care, they have to be provided for, their wants are innumerable, and yet what a joy they are!

But this happiness is not infrequently disturbed. Everything may be moving tranquilly along, all is serene felicity, when suddenly there is a whirl, and a rushing of wings, and a darling child is taken. God has stirred up the nest, and what a commotion there is! It practically breaks up the home; an adjustment to a new condition of things is necessary; the family is all at sea, only it is on a great aerial ocean, and they feel themselves sinking, sinking, until they cry to God in their distress. Thereupon they find that he is hovering directly over them, and when their strength is about to fail, they feel his wings beneath. The affliction does them good. When they get settled again in their domestic life, it is on a higher plane, at a greater spiritual elevation, and they are surprised to see how much nearer heaven they are. They are lifted by the wings of the Almighty to a more sublime height of religious experience. God hears the cry of his children, and bears them up, lest they be dashed upon the stones. The home is not stirred up for nothing. Every time it is visited with trouble, there are divine pinions to sustain and carry aloft, and only those, who will not take advantage of the proffered help, sink till they are

Eagles and Storks

self-destroyed. Foolish eaglets they would be to ignore the helpful wings of the parent bird. Their fate would be to go to the bottom of the chasm. But let them accept assistance, and how they soar upward! Likewise, says Isaiah, "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles."

Once more God stirs up the nest. If the young couple we have pictured beginning life together, and passing through its varied scenes, meet discipline in the right spirit, they will be lifted each time a little higher. With trying experiences they will feel that they are growing old, as they are, but to the heavenly Father they will always be children. "Even to hoar hairs," he says, "will I *carry* you." He will care for them as the eagle cares for her young, and that, too, at the very last. There will come an hour when the rushing plumes will sweep through their home again, and they themselves shall be taken, and they shall be driven out to try the unseen realities of eternity. But even there, they shall not be forsaken. For them judgment to come will have no terrors. Christ, as Paul says, will be their Passover, a word of comforting significance when analyzed, *Pass-over*, and when taken in connection with the ornithological illustration of a prophet, who says, "As *birds* flying, so will the Lord of hosts protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver it, he will *pass over* and preserve it." The

Biblical Nature Studies

Lord with fluttering pinions, as it were, will hover over his redeemed children in the presence of his Spirit, with the wings of the celestial dove, with the solicitous affection of the mother bird flying to and fro just above her young for their defense and protection and help. There will be heard chanted in the sky by all the holy angels as they come the inspired song:

“He shall cover thee with his pinions,
And under his wings shalt thou take refuge.”

Ultimately those wings shall be placed *under* the Lord's beloved, who shall be taken up still higher, this time even to be received out of sight in the sky above. The eagle will have borne them to their native element. They will have been “caught up,” says an apostle, “in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” Then can each sing with the sacred poet,

“I thank thee for the wing of love,
Which stirred my worldly nest;
And for the stormy clouds which drove
The flutterer to thy breast.”

We can rise to this final height of heaven, only as the wind is in our wings, only as soaring power is imparted to us, only as we have “wings like the wings of a stork.” Says Jeremiah, “The stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle-dove and the swallow and the crane observe the time of their coming.” As surely as the migratory instinct

Eagles and Storks

of the first here named leads it from darkest Africa to its nest in fairer Europe, in a better and more genial clime, though bewildering sometimes may seem the blackness of the storm encountered in the passage, so certainly, however uncharted may seem the way, shall the "home of the soul" be eventually reached by the immortal spirit that follows the divine impulse, the holy aspiration, planted in the human breast. We can not better close than with this thought as set forth by Bryant in his "Ode to a Waterfowl:"

"Thou art gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form, but on my heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

"He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright."

XII

SOME STRIKING CONSTELLATIONS

XII

SOME STRIKING CONSTELLATIONS

WE are very much inclined to have the contracted vision of the terrestrial. We do not get the sweep of the celestial. We are like Bunyan's famous character, who was always using his muck rake, who never lifted his eyes from the ground to the sky. That was good advice given by Emerson when he said, "Hitch your wagon to a star." We can do this in a consideration of some striking constellations which once attracted the attention of a sage in the orient. It was Job who said,

"Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades,
Or loose the bands of Orion?
Canst thou lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season?
Or canst thou guide the Bear with her train?"

The significance of these words is not readily determined. There is a diversity of views, and we may not be able to arrive at absolutely correct conclusions. However, our motto, which any High-school or College class might well adopt, will be the Latin phrase, *Per aspera ad astra*, Through difficulties to the stars. We will indulge in some astral reflections. We will learn some true lessons that are easily deducible from the patriarch's language, whether they

Biblical Nature Studies

were in his mind or not. He turned his eyes heavenward, and received religious instruction from the starry beauty which he saw. Whatever constellation he viewed, he was impressed with the majesty and glory of God.

He first propounded the inquiry, "Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades?" The margin says, the "chain" of the Pleiades, while the rendering of the common version is, "sweet influences." You remember the classic origin of this constellation. Seven sisters were pursued by an enemy, and in their fright and distress they cried for help from above. In answer to their prayer they were changed into a flock of doves, and were borne away to the sky where as bright orbs they still shine. They were not cruelly separated by death. They were forever united on high, and their glory has been sung ever since.

The eastern poets have called them a "brilliant rosette," and who but God could arrange the beautiful petals? Tennyson sees them "tangled in a silver braid," and who but God could weave the charming web in which they are caught? Job represents the cluster as linked together, and who but God could make this chain? What is the chain? Pope tells us in his *Essay on Man*:

"Look round our world; behold the chain of love
Combining all below and all above,
See plastic nature working to this end,
The single atoms each to other tend,
Attract, attracted to, the next in place,
Formed and impelled its neighbor to embrace."

Some Striking Constellations

Nature's chain in plain prose is none other than the law of gravitation. By this the Pleiades are bound together, and Job stands reverential before the mighty, divine force, and challenges human power to accomplish any thing so grand. "Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades?" Canst thou give that cohesive force, by which they are united in a splendid constellation?

The ancients counted seven Pleiads. As only six are conspicuous, visible to the ordinary eyesight, there has been a discussion regarding a "lost Pleiad," but astronomers tell us that all are there which have ever been there. Perhaps in the clear, oriental sky, the Biblical writer could see seven. For that matter, very keen eyes now can see eleven, and to telescopic vision about four hundred appear. With this enlargement of the number to modern knowledge, still more impressive is the fact that all these are held together by a strong chain. Then when we consider that this same law of gravity runs through the whole sidereal system, through the entire universe, we feel increasingly the almightiness of Him, who by one simple principle of attraction and repulsion harmoniously balances in infinite space such countless worlds.

So nice is the adjustment, that, as we are all aware, it led in 1846 to the discovery of the giant planet of the solar system. It was found that Uranus swayed a little, so to speak, to

Biblical Nature Studies

this side and to that. From these slight variations it was confidently believed that there was another world attracting it besides Jupiter and Saturn. The exact place in which this disturbing globe must be was calculated, and telescopes were turned upon the locality indicated, and there it was, magnificent Neptune, never before having been given a local habitation and a name. Was there ever such exactness of construction?

Canst thou make a chain like this, running through all nature? Is there any thing like universal gravity which comes within the remotest possibilities of human ability to accomplish? Beneficent law is at work everywhere, giving us seed-time and harvest, giving us certainties upon which we can depend. We have the assurance that God is over all his works. Not a material atom is beyond his control, not a sparrow falleth to the ground without his notice. His providential government is coextensive with his law of gravitation. He maketh all things work together for good to his children. Sweet influences are these which are operating, and which are suggested by the union of the seven sisters in the sky, by the cluster of the Pleiades, by the chain which binds them together. In this thought we get an explanation of the patriarch's wonderful trust. He bowed submissively and gladly before him who made the marvelous chain of nature and of providence.

Some Striking Constellations

A second question is, "Canst thou loose the bands of Orion?" Orion, in Grecian mythology, was a giant. He was so tall that he could wade through the deepest seas, and still have his shoulders above the water, and on land his head, as it were, brushed the clouds. Says Virgil in the *Æneid*:

"Like tall Orion stalking o'er the flood,
When with his brawny breast he cuts the waves;
His shoulders scarce the topmost billow laves."

He was noted for his wickedness, and as a punishment, according to one interpretation, he was chained in the sky. The inspired writer may have seen in the fable of his being bound there pictorial proclamation of the folly of sin, and of the wickedness of rebellion against the Almighty. Canst thou loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou swing the stars out of their course? Nay, they are fixed in their orbits. God holds them steadily to their appointed circuit. Natural law is resistless. Orion has never broken away from the bounds by which he was first circumscribed. He has not been able to burst the fetters. He is securely fastened.

Here, too, we need to remember that to the scholarship of to-day Orion is vastly more than to the Oriental mind. The gigantic warrior of old has not only a triangle of small stars to form his head, but three very bright orbs are in his belt. Never was another so brilliantly

Biblical Nature Studies

belted as to have three enormous suns in his girdle. He likewise has a nebula all his own, as a kind of private possession. In short, a whole cluster of stars go to form this constellation. Nevertheless Orion, though so vast, is not independent of the rest of the universe. He is rigidly bound to a definite place. The Giant is forever bound by the hand of Omnipotence. When God shall bind the sinner what prospect can there ever be of a release? Chained Orion gives solemn warning of the certain doom awaiting the finally impenitent.

Divine law will be as unvarying and unyielding as natural, and when we see how unalterable the latter is we cannot hope to fly the orbit of permanency of character, into which we are gradually settling. There is that giant constellation just where it was seen four thousand years ago! Canst thou loose its bands? No more canst thou free thyself when thou hast been bound hand and foot by the cords of iniquity. If the Pleiades speak of light and gladness, Orion speaks of gloom and sadness. Hence the prophet Amos says, "Seek him that maketh the Pleiades and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night." He does both, brings sunshine to the righteous, and shadow to the wicked. There are the sweet influences of the Pleiades, and there are the bands of Orion. There are benevolent and there are malevolent forces at work. We can

Some Striking Constellations

be victims of the latter, or we can have our interests subverted by the former.

Our view takes a wider range with the next question, "Canst thou lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season?" The Marginal reading is, "The signs of the Zodiac." Twelve constellations were and are included in this belt, which in a sense sweeps the circle. That is, God is omnipresent. He is not confined in his agency to a single constellation, but he is in the wheeling and blazing constellations to the utmost bounds of space. Do we appreciate what that means?

Consider how perfectly vast the universe is. The telescope resolves the Milky Way and other nebulous appearances into thousands of flashing worlds. Where one star appears to the naked eye, let hundreds of orbs flash forth, and we begin to get what the situation is. About one hundred million suns have so far shone upon the scientifically enlarged vision according to the astronomer Young, while Professor Newcomb said, that if we could perfect a sufficiently large telescope, the number probably would be found to be "hundreds of millions."

Some of these are so far away, that, though they are speeding on at the rate of thirty to fifty miles a second, they do not during the lifetime of one of us change their apparent location in the least. Observe yonder fixed star, note exactly where it is. Now follow one of earth's most renowned men through his whole career. He is born, he grows to years of ma-

Biblical Nature Studies

turity, he has his struggles, his defeats and victories, he makes a great name in history, he reaches his four-score limit, and dies. Turn again the eyes to the star noticed at his birth. So distant is it, that it has not shifted its position a single iota, so far as can be with telescopes even detected. And yet it has been shooting on with a velocity in comparison with which our swiftest express train moves at a snail's pace, a mile a minute as compared with thirty to fifty miles a second, while the flight of *Arcturus* is said to exceed two hundred miles a second.

When Napoleon wished to inspire his soldiers in Egypt, he said impressively, "From yonder Pyramids forty centuries look down upon you." Yonder are glittering suns, whose light, as it strikes your eyes at present, is older than the Pyramids. Though it has been travelling 186,000 miles a second, it has been on its way to the earth longer than the historic period of the race. Now all these rolling spheres at such immense distances whirl on in regular succession. They preserve an orderly march through infinity, because God is everywhere directing and controlling. With what significance the question recurs, "Canst thou lead forth the *Maz-zaroth* in their season?" Canst thou exercise a potent influence upon the whole *Zodiac*? God can and does. Thinkest thou, then, that thou canst escape his all-seeing eyes? Our answer must be that of the Psalmist, "Whither shall

Some Striking Constellations

I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there." God will be to us either light or darkness, either the sweet influences of the Pleiades or the bands of Orion. There is no escaping him, for he sweeps the whole Zodiac with his spiritual presence.

There is one more inquiry, "Canst thou guide the Bear with her train?" We might ask in this connection, in view of a recent astronomical appearance which challenged the attention of the world, "Canst thou guide Halley's comet?" On January 14, 1742, died the astronomer who at the early age of twenty-four made himself celebrated by his prediction that the comet, which since has properly borne his name, would return long after his death on schedule time, and it did. Here is a wanderer in space, into whose depths it speeds to such a distance that seventy-five years are required to complete its circuit. It recedes three thousand million miles from the sun, and after it rounds its goal it comes rushing back and down its track toward our earth at the rate of two and a half million miles every day. But though it traverses a distance so vast and with a velocity that almost takes our breath away, its return after three-quarters of a century can be foretold with measurable accuracy, even to the very year, because it is guided on its course by the eternal God. Art thou civil engineer enough to mark

Biblical Nature Studies

out a course like that, canst thou guide Halley's comet?

To revert to the Scriptural question, "Canst thou guide the Bear with her train?" This to us is the Dipper, so clearly outlined in the sky that all of us can see it there very plainly. To us it resembles this humble utensil more than it does the animal after which it was named by antiquity. But we must keep the viewpoint of the Orient in the present consideration of Ursa Major. Here, too, seems to be primarily a classic reference.

A maiden was fated to be changed into a bear, but when in her misfortune she was about to be shot by a hunter, she was snatched away from death by the deity whose mercy she had implored, to become the constellation of the Great Bear. She continued to be followed by her implacable enemy of earth, who begged that she might never be allowed to set like other stars in the ocean. The request could be granted with wisdom and kindness, for why should she ever desire to sink so low again? She never was to go below the horizon, and that is her peculiar glory. This constellation never does set. Or, as Homer says after mentioning the Pleiades, and Orion,

"And the Bear near him, called by some the Wain,
That, wheeling, keeps Orion still in sight,
Yet bathes not in the waters of the sea."

In other words, this constellation ever shines.

Some Striking Constellations

God makes it circle in splendor forever above the horizon. So it is with redeemed souls that have been translated. It might be supposed a deprivation for them never to be permitted to return to this earth of sin and sorrow, and to what Shakespeare calls the "sea of troubles" here. But it is far better for them to be removed from this mundane sphere, where they are in danger of becoming brutish and degraded,—it is far better to be translated to the heavens, where there is "no more sea," and where they shall "shine as the brightness of the firmament," says Daniel, and "as the stars for ever and ever." Such a glorious future can come from none but Christ, "who only hath immortality," says Paul, "dwelling in light unapproachable." Canst thou guide the Bear with her train? Canst thou make the constellation that never sets? Canst thou confer upon thyself a splendid immortality? No, but thou canst attain unto this through faith in the Risen One. If any will lead a Christlike life, if they will let their light shine on earth, they shall shine forever, they shall never go below the horizon. Most truly says a poet:

"The shining firmament shall fade,
And sparkling stars resign their light;
But these shall know nor change nor shade,
For ever fair, for ever bright."

It is only a few samples of constellations which we have been contemplating, and we might study them ad infinitum. They are

Biblical Nature Studies

blazing away to the outermost bounds of space. We can never say what the ancients said of the Pillars of Hercules, our Gibraltar, "Ne plus ultra," nothing more beyond. Even then there was a beyond in undiscovered islands and continents, for the Americas were yet lying in quiet seclusion, and there had not been so much as dreamings of the North and South Poles, which have yielded up their secrets to our age. Much more is there a beyond in a universe, which must ever expand to the student of astronomy. The farther we might go, the more would we be awed. We might as well stop here as anywhere.

We cannot conclude better than in the words of the German author, Jean Paul Richter, when he vividly represented the feelings of a disembodied human spirit on an imaginary tour with angels through endless space. Let me indicate parts of the marvelous journey which they are pictured as having taken: "Sometimes with the solemn flight of angel wings they passed through Zaharas of darkness, * * * sometimes they swept over frontiers that were quickening under prophetic motions from God. * * * In a moment the rushing of planets was upon them; in a moment the blazing of suns was around them. * * * Without measure were the architraves, past number were the archways, beyond memory the gates. Within were stairs that scaled the eternities around. * * * Suddenly, as they thr's rode from infinite to infinite,

Some Striking Constellations

suddenly as they thus tilted over abysmal worlds, a mighty cry arose that systems more mysterious, that worlds more billowy, other heights and other depths, were coming, were nearing, were at hand. Then the man sighed and stopped, shuddered and wept. His overladen heart uttered itself in tears, and he said, 'Angel, I will go no farther; for the spirit of man acheth with this infinity. Insufferable is the glory of God. Let me * * * hide me * * * for end I see there is none.' ''

XIII

THE TEMPLE EXPANDING ROUND US
TO INFINITY

XIII

THE TEMPLE EXPANDING ROUND US TO INFINITY

THERE have been many fine temples erected on the earth. We have admired St. Paul's in London, that architectural masterpiece of Sir Christopher Wren, and the Spanish cathedral at Seville, with its picturesque vistas through graceful arches. We have stood before that noble Gothic structure at Cologne, with its massive and soaring twin towers, and before the Milan cathedral with its multitudinous pinnacles and statues. We have had our attention enthralled by St. Mark's at Venice, with its splendid mosaics and its exquisite color effects, and by St. Peter's in Rome, the most spacious and the grandest cathedral of Christendom. We have felt the venerableness of St. Sophia in Constantinople, erected by Justinian away back in the fifth century, long the metropolitan church of the Greeks, but since 1453 a Moham-medan mosque.

We have been deeply impressed by pagan temples, by the Pantheon of Rome completed 27 B.C., with its unequalled dome in which is a circular opening twenty-eight feet in diameter, giving it its only light. We have been held

Biblical Nature Studies

entranced by the Parthenon on the Acropolis at Athens, dating from the middle of the fifth century before our era, and surpassing in classic beauty any other building on the face of the globe. We have gone to the site of Old Thebes in Egypt, and we have been amazed at Karnak, begun at least 2,500 and perhaps 2,700 years before Christ, and being larger than any other edifice constructed by human hands for divine worship, with an extreme length of 1,200 feet, nearly a quarter of a mile.

Perhaps the imagination has been most struck by Solomon's temple, and we have gone to the top of Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem just to see its site, where now stands the attractive mosque of Omar, or the Dome of the Rock. This Old Testament house of worship must have been magnificent. Not that it was so very large, being only 105 feet long and 35 wide. But the material and the work were of the most expensive kind. The timbers were cut and some of the stones were quarried in a distant country, from which they had to be floated to Joppa by way of the ocean, and thence transferred overland. Laborers to the number of 183,000 were employed, and seven years were required to complete the building.

The second temple here, of the time of the restoration from Babylon, was not so imposing a structure as the great original. That of Herod the Great, however, frequented by the Lord and disciples, must have rivalled Solo-

The Temple Expanding

mon's. There were employed upon it 18,000 workmen, with 1,000 wagons to do the hauling, and for forty-six years it was in process of erection. From Josephus, who had seen it, we learn that it had pillars between thirty and forty feet high, each being an entire stone of white marble, and so thick that to span it there were required three men with extended arms. The gates were plated with gold, and they swung on hinges of the same precious metal. The roof was covered with one mass of golden spikes. On a door was carved a golden vine with clusters of grapes, a single bunch being as large as a man. In fact, the temple was so glorious, that at the rising of the sun, says the Jewish historian, it "reflected back a very fiery splendor," which forced people to "turn their eyes away, just as they would have done at the sun's own rays." At a distance, he adds, it appeared "like a mountain covered with snow; for as to those parts of it that were not gilt, they were exceeding white."

But all these temples, which we have been recalling, were inferior to what William Cullen Bryant conceived of when he said,

"The groves were God's first temples,"

while he continued,

"Father, thy hand
Hath reared these venerable columns, thou
Didst weave this verdant roof."

There is a still more impressive conception

Biblical Nature Studies

than this, indicated by the sacred poet who said,

“O thou, whose own vast temple stands,
Built over earth and sea.”

Professor Park of Andover in picturing this said, it “has the stars for the gilding of its roof, and mines of gold for the pillars that sustain its floor, and the rose and the lily and the jessamine ever renewing themselves in the carpet that blooms for us to tread upon while we are walking through the temple, resonant as its wide spaces are with the hymns of the forest, and the eternal anthem of the waves of the sea.” The thought of Solomon rose to a still greater and more sublime height, when at the dedication of his own matchless house he said, “Will God in very deed dwell on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded!” The various particulars here indicated will be followed out under suggestion from the astronomical figure employed. Under guidance from “*Ecce Coelum*,” and various works on astronomy we will traverse the stellar regions. Each of us will doubtless be moved to exclaim with Kepler under similar circumstances, “O Almighty God, I am thinking thy thoughts after thee!”

The first item is, “Will God in very deed dwell on the earth?” The idea is that this globe of ours is not a worthy abode for his glorious Majesty. And yet this earth is sug-

The Temple Expanding

gestive of much that is grand. Its 25,000 miles of circumference cannot be traversed under several weeks. Jules Verne's work, "Around the World in Eighty Days," was considered a wonder in the last century. It of course was written as fiction, and very fictitious did its implied claim seem to be. In his generation only the wildest imagination could conceive of so long a journey being taken in such a short period. The time, however, in 1911 in a test trip was cut in two and a little more by actual accomplishment, the journey having been really made in thirty-nine days and a fraction. In 1913 four days were clipped even from this record, by using the fastest express trains and the swiftest steamship lines, with flying automobiles to make the connections. Nevertheless this shorter time speaks of vast distances travelled. In simply crossing our country from the Atlantic to the Pacific, we are impressed with the length of time taken, four days and four nights, clipping it along every minute, never relaxing our speed except for the change of cars in Chicago. Continue this nine times as long as the transcontinental journey takes, and you make the circuit of our globe, and you begin to get some idea of how immense this terrestrial ball is.

Its size may also be realized by an astronomical illustration. We admire our full moon, and we realize its largeness when we are informed that the entire lunar surface is nearly as ex-

Biblical Nature Studies

tensive as North and South America combined. But this earth at the distance of our satellite would appear to an observer fourteen times larger than our full moon. Ours, therefore, is considerable of a planet. But it is thought suitable only for God's "footstool," which it is called in the Bible. As we reflect upon its continents and oceans, its forests and rivers, its mountains and lakes, its springing flowers and singing birds, we are amazed at its vastness and beauty, while yet the intimation is that it is not a fit habitation for the King of kings, for the Creator of the universe.

The next thought is that the "heaven" cannot contain God. By this would seem to be meant the nearer heavenly bodies; those, for instance, belonging to our solar system, and those comets which at infrequent intervals come within the range of our more immediate circle of worlds. Let us pass hastily through this part of the house not made with hands. There is Venus, a star with a beauty all its own, and nearly as large as our earth. At its transit it has been seen to have a vaporous atmosphere, and to be in such a general condition, that, said Proctor to a Glasgow audience, though others differ from him, "presumably it is inhabited." There is Mars with its two moons to our one. At its poles are seen white patches, which sometimes are larger and again are smaller, plainly speaking of winter and summer up there, of Arctic snow with its advancing and its receding

The Temple Expanding

line. Mars indeed is declared by one astronomer to be "a miniature of our own earth, and in all probability inhabited by such creatures as we are familiar with." This is evidenced, says Professor Percival Lowell, by what he calls canals, immense artificial constructions that because of their geometrical regularity and because of the nicety of their articulation at the junction points would seem to testify to superhuman intelligence and capacity.

Then there is Jupiter supposed to be still red-hot, not having yet cooled down to the degree that this earth has, with the latter's solid outside crust, and with a molten interior breaking out here and there in volcanoes. It has been suggested that the fiery Jovian globe, still incandescent, may be a sort of sun to its several moons, which themselves may be planets, and which possibly may be inhabited by beings to whom our luminary would appear twenty-five times smaller than it does to us, but to whom glowing, cloud-enveloped Jupiter would be an "amazing object of contemplation," a "glorious disc." And it has several moons, only four of these having been discovered till in 1892 a fifth was revealed, and even while one of our later astronomies was telling me that there were now seven, the Lick Observatory quietly announced, in 1914, that the ninth had been found. There is also Uranus with its four satellites, and Saturn with its eight, and with its enchanting rings, an outer and an inner,

Biblical Nature Studies

and there is mighty Neptune with its one moon.

The great central orb of our solar system must not be forgotten. It outweighs more than 330,000 earths. It gives forth a heat, which according to one computation would be equivalent to that sent forth from our globe, if upon every square yard of its surface there should be consumed three tons of coal every second. What a conflagration is thus raging constantly on yonder ball of fire. The flames in tremendous sun-storms have been known by astronomical measurements to shoot up to the prodigious height of more than 160,000 miles.

Around this fiery center, Mercury, the nearest planet, revolves once in three months, a period that therefore is the length of the Mercurial year. Neptune, the most distant planet, is 164 of our years in completing the revolution. There are comets, whose orbits are so vast, that it takes thousands of our years to make the circuit of the sun. The period of the comet of 1858, Donati's, is about two thousand years. It will not be seen again till there has fled a time as long as has elapsed since the birth of Christ. "The comet of 1811," says one authority, "when it last saw the earth, saw it yet dripping with the waters of the flood; the comet of 1680, when it last saw the earth, saw it without form and void, and prophesying but faintly of an Eden and an Adam still three thousands years" in the future, and when it comes round again, nine thousand years hence,

The Temple Expanding

we could hope with the gifted author of "Ecce Coelum," that it might be to witness "the predicted new heavens and new earth in which shall dwell righteousness."

We take a still wider sweep into the immensity of nature, when we contemplate "the heaven of heavens." It is inspiring to think of our system with its planets and moons revolving about the sun, but there are other sun-systems. There are what are called in astronomical language fixed stars. These are self-luminous, and so are unlike the planets which shine with reflected light. That is, these fixed stars are suns like ours, and they revolve about each other, as telescopic observations demonstrate. They are so far away as to seem mere points of light, only twinkling in the distance.

There is the North Star, which has guided so many mariners on the great deep, and which not long ago assisted so many slaves in escaping from their southern masters. This is a sun from which light, travelling 186,000 miles a second, takes seventy years to reach this earth, and were it this moment blotted out, we would not know it for the three score and ten years marking the usual limit of a human life. It does not seem so very dazzling because it is so distant, but as a matter of fact it is equal to one hundred of our suns. There is Arcturus blazing away with the brilliancy of more than five hundred of our suns. Alcyone, the bright-

Biblical Nature Studies

est of the Pleiades, has a light as powerful as twelve thousand of our solar orb. As another has said, our sun is a "mere rush-light and glow-worm as compared with many of the huge luminaries which pour their glories adown the immensity of nature." And how immense nature is, we can in a measure conceive, when we are informed that the passage of light from the Pleiades to us requires seven hundred years—so that Alcyone could have been extinguished seven centuries since, while we are receiving its light as shot forth through space that long ago. And Alcyone with its circling suns may be wheeling with other Alcyones around a larger center still, perhaps 100,000 suns strong. It is wheel within wheel far beyond our present ability to observe. So far as can be detected, however, there is no one vast sun, no center of centers, around which the whole universe revolves. Our solar system, for instance, has been flying straight ahead toward the constellation Lyra during all human history, ten miles a second, a million miles every day. Whence we started thither, and when we shall get there, are unanswered conundrums. A reputable astronomer tells us that we probably will not reach the vicinity of Vega for half a million years or more.

Such enormous distances can only be measured by what is called the astronomical unit, a light-year, which is the distance that light travels in a year. When it flashes along 186,-

The Temple Expanding

000 miles every second, more than seven times around the earth between two ticks of a watch, we can appreciate how far it will go in a year, and that is what gives the standard of measurement. Our authorities inform us that the most remote stars in the stellar system are ten or even twenty thousand light-years distant. The nearest star to us is Alpha Centauri, and that it is more than 275,000 times as distant as our orb, which itself is more than ninety million miles away, and which we could not reach on the fastest express train running a mile a minute day and night under 175 of our years. When we reflect that there may be in boundless space other sidereal systems as yet undiscovered and perhaps forever undiscoverable by mortal man, the imagination is fairly staggered, accustomed though it is to flights extending to absolutely bewildering distances.

Confining ourselves to what can be seen, what are some of the facts? The telescope is continually making new revelations. It resolves the Milky Way and other nebulae into myriads of flashing worlds. Where one star appears to the naked eye, let thousands of dazzling orbs leap into sight, and some conception is gotten of how thickly strewn space is with stars. "In one region," is the declaration, "they seem to form sprays of stars like diamonds sprinkled over fern leaves; elsewhere they lie in streams and rows, in coronets and loops and festoons."

Think again of the variegated colors, diverse

Biblical Nature Studies

as the tints of the rainbow. Polaris gives its planets a yellow light, while the rays from Castor are green, and the constellation of the Cross and Altar bathes every thing in a radiance that is blood-red. Capella is yellowish, Arcturus reddish, and Vega bluish. Some are green, and others are red as garnets and rubies. Nay more, the magnifying lens reveals to us the fact, that the "suns of the *same* system often have different colors." How picturesque would be a planet upon which suns yellow, green and red, all shone. To some intelligences in the universe, a blue sun may be coming up in the east, while an orange sun hastens toward the west. We are informed of one stellar group whose variously colored suns are "so closely thronged together as to appear in a powerful telescope like a superb bouquet, or a piece of fancy jewelry." Could we have the standpoint of God, at the last center of all centers, if such there be, we would see all about us blazing constellations of red, and orange, and yellow, and green, and blue, and indigo, and violet,—revolving rainbows of glory. Such is "the heaven of heavens," which cannot contain God.

Not only is space with these countless and radiant worlds boundless, but time also is limitless. There are two eternities which we need to couple to get any adequate conception of the Infinite Creator, and of the house whose architect he is, and whose builder and maker he is. Let us endeavor to measure eternity

The Temple Expanding

by astronomical cycles. Professor Dolbear of Tufts College once said, that light though flying like a flash through the universe would require more than 800,000 years to reach us from the most remote sun known to exist. Marvelous is the statement of the astronomer Proctor, who wrote, "Some of the fainter stars revealed by the great Rosse telescope lie at a distance so enormous that their light has taken more than 100,000 years in reaching us," while he added, that "millions of years" probably would be required for the passage to us of light from some worlds which have not yet been revealed.

Now take for substance an illustration heard in my early life. Its details have escaped me, but we can readily construct something similar. Suppose that a bird took a grain of sand from this earth, and flew away at the rate of 186,000 miles a second. In Dolbear's 800,000 years to the most distant orb now discernible, or in Proctor's millions of years to some more distant star not yet discovered, it reaches a starry world in the outermost limits of boundless space, and there leaves what it had carried so long in its beak. Millions of years, to use the larger figure, are required for its return flight to this globe. It takes another solitary sand, and flies away, away, away, and deposits it in the same place. It continues this till the continent of Africa is removed, till two continents are gone, till all of them and the isles of the sea have vanished, till this entire terrestrial

Biblical Nature Studies

ball has been carried away grain by grain. How long has the bird been in accomplishing its task? Billions and trillions and quadrillions of years; and yet we are no nearer having the measure of eternity than when we began.

Considering thus the boundlessness of both space and time, getting just a glimpse of the temple expanding round us to infinity, we can well adopt the language of Walt Whitman at his best. In his somewhat disjointed and yet in a very impressive way he wrote these lines:

“I open my scuttle at night and see the far-sprinkled systems,
And all I can see multiplied as high as I can cipher edge but
the rim of the farther systems.
Wider and wider they spread, expanding, always expanding,
Onward and outward and forever outward.

“My sun has his sun and round him obediently wheels,
He joins with his partners a group of superior circuit,
And greater sets follow, making specks of the greatest inside
them.

“There is no stoppage and never can be stoppage.

* * * * *

“A few quadrillions of eras, a few octillions of cubic leagues,
do not hazard the span or make it impatient.
They are but parts, any thing is but a part.

“See ever so far, there is limitless space outside of that,
Count ever so much, there is limitless time around that.

“My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,
The Lord will be there and wait till I come on perfect terms,
The great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine will be
there.”

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE BIBLE VERIFIED

Pages 132. Price \$1.00

Four Editions, and Translations into Spanish and Japanese.

President J. G. K. McClure, D.D., McCormick Theological Seminary:

I have never found a book so suitable for size and contents to place in the hands of the ordinary inquirer who desires to know the preeminent value of the Bible in the literatures of the world as "The Bible Verified."

Bishop J. P. Newman, D.D., LL.D.:

It is a timely book. The common people will read it gladly. Scholars will find mental recreation therein. * * * * Would that some wealthy saint would put "The Bible Verified" in the hand of every minister and Sunday-school superintendent in the land.

Rev. S. F. Smith, D.D., Author of "America:"

The successive chapters unfold with an ever renewed interest. The illustrations from history are luminous and striking. **** * I wish it might be used as a classic.

Prof. A. H. Sayce, D.D., LL.D., Oxford University, England:

It is written at once interestingly and forcibly. I see that you have consulted the latest and best authorities.

THE TREND OF THE CENTURIES

Pages 419. \$1.00 net, postpaid

Prof. George P. Fisher, D.D., LL.D., Yale University:

It shows how extensive and intelligent has been your survey of the past, how careful and broad have been your researches, and in what a scholarly and catholic spirit you have judged of historical events and persons. It is an able and suggestive review of the course of history.

The Presbyterian Journal, Philadelphia:

Those who have read "The Bible Verified," a book from the pen of the same author, will readily understand the character of the work before us. There is this difference, however, "The Trend of the Centuries" is the stronger of the two. * * * A more powerful argument for the actual participation of God in human affairs we do not know.

The American Journal of Theology, Chicago University:

The matter is put in a fresh and fascinating way. The great epochs of history are so skilfully and vividly portrayed, that the reader becomes an interested and delighted spectator of the great and inspiring acts of God's providence.

The Expository Times, Edinburgh, Scotland:

It is a book to be read by the multitude. It bristles with literary references, but they are all intelligible.

THE EASTER HOPE

Pages 132. Price \$1.00

Two Editions

The Baptist Commonwealth, Philadelphia:

The author's arguments are clear, cogent and convincing. * * * We do not see how this book can fail to be of service to his fellow preachers, and to Christians generally.

Herald and Presbyter, Cincinnati:

This is a strikingly forceful presentation of the great arguments for the immortal life.

The Pacific Churchman, San Francisco:

There is a reasoned argument for the resurrection worked out with the skill of a practiced and eloquent writer.

Ex-Pres. Timothy Dwight, D.D., LL.D., Yale University:

I read it twice with great interest. * * * * You have made a very able and helpful volume.

Prof. Edward L. Curtis, D.D., in Yale Divinity Quarterly:

Dr. Archibald writes with great clearness and simplicity of style and abundant use of happy quotation, especially of poetry. There is not a dull page in the book.

Rev. Charles L. Morgan, D.D., First Church, Elgin, Ill.:

I wish to congratulate you on the most charming and at the same time convincing assembling of the facts and arguments that I have ever read. * * * * I truly believe the book will be a classic on this great theme.

Rev. A. Z. Conrad, D.D., Park Street Church, Boston:

I read it from cover to cover. * * * * It is stimulative, suggestive, inspiring.

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: May 2005

PreservationTechnologies

A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 328 739 7

